



ReSPA

Regional School
of Public Administration

BUILDING TOGETHER
GOVERNANCE FOR THE FUTURE

Annual Report

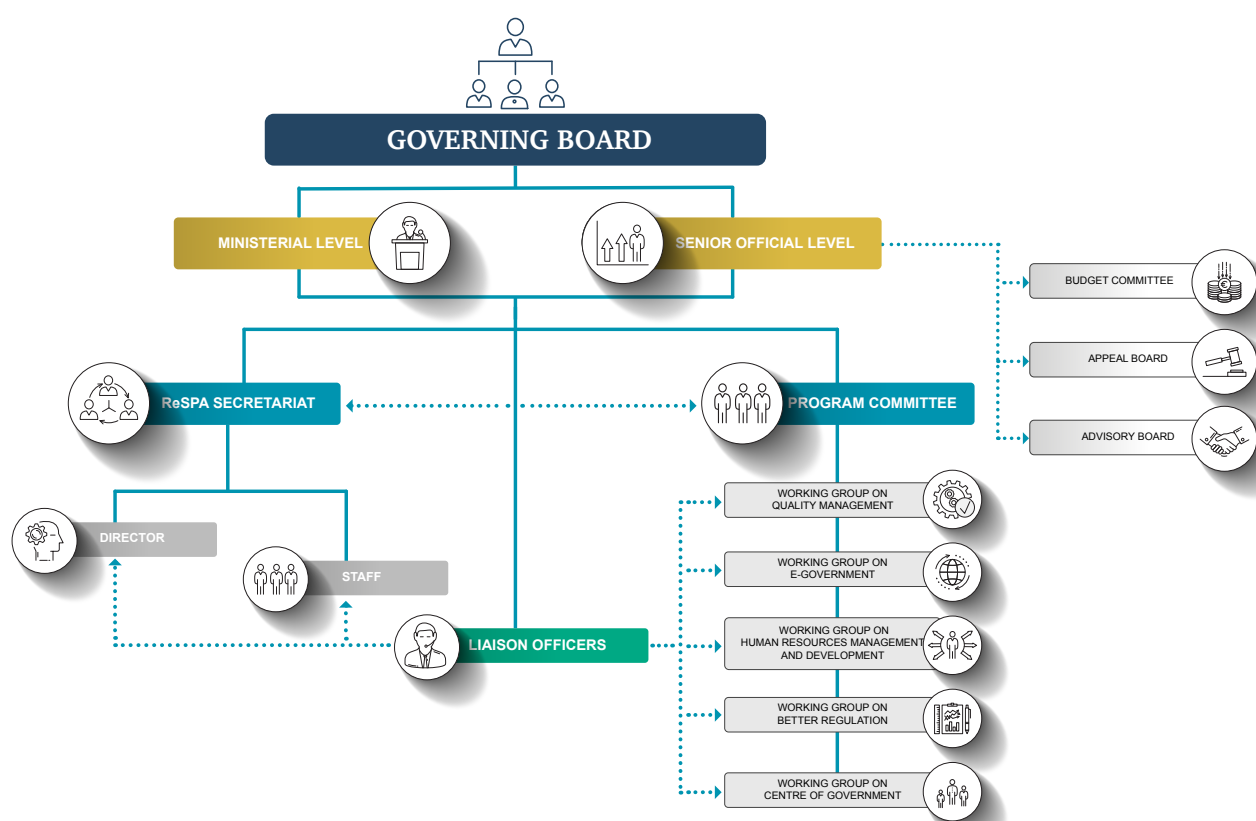
16 October 2019 - 15 October 2020



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www.respaweb.eu

ReSPA Organizational Structure



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About ReSPA



Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is a regional organization established in 2010 as a joint initiative financed by European Commission and WB administrations. It is managed and governed by five ReSPA Members: Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Republic of Serbia, while Kosovo* is beneficiary.

As a regional hub aiming to help governments finding an effective and sustainable way to resolve the historical burden of less efficient institutions in public administration, and to take forward Western Balkans (WB) in the area of Public Administration Reform (PAR) and European Integration (EI) we in ReSPA special emphasis devote to Quality Management, e-Governance, Human Resources Management and Development, Centre of Government and Better Regulation.

Our mission is to support creation of transparent, accountable and professional public administration institutions which provide efficient services to the benefit of citizens and businesses.

We put forward our resources, our expertise, and vast skillset to provide the WB governments with an access to global best practices and to enjoy comprehensive research documents with strong recommendations to strengthen the quality of public administration institutions.

As a people-oriented international organization, we are aware that European integration gives citizens in the WB region a chance to build the institutions that will gradually become more transparent and trustworthy, that will last and create a culture of self-regulation in the Western Balkan societies.

¹ Kosovo* - This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and ICJ Advisory opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of independence.

Foreword by the ReSPA Director



Ms Ratka Sekulović,
ReSPA Director

The year behind us will remain as one of the most challenging but also most successful ones since ReSPA has been founded. The COVID-19 global pandemic largely determined the change of the way we live and operate. To quickly adapt to the changing landscape, we have shifted most of our activities online and have continued to realize them with the same commitment, devotion and energy.

ReSPA has established a unique COVID-19 Western Balkans Digital Collaborative Platform to help the Western Balkans governments cope better amid the pandemic. Affinity mapping of the needs and critical challenges among the Western Balkans showed that digital transformation is essential for governments to recover fast and make visible progress in the upcoming years, which also guided us in ReSPA to upgrade our planned activities to meet the changing needs of the WB governances promptly and effectively.

crisis means the WB public administrations are ready for the giant step ahead in digitalization and innovation.

For the first time, we have initiated preparation of the ReSPA Monitoring system and developed Monitoring Toolkit, which, in the years ahead of us, will allow us to measure the usage of support from ReSPA and to set of defined indicators at individual and institutional level in a systemic and comprehensive manner.

At the Ministerial dialogue in September this year, we presented the *Analysis of Economic and Social Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Western Balkans* administrations as well as Declaration on *Digital transformation of the WBs Ministries for public administration including coordinated response on emergency situation*.

We in ReSPA will stay devoted to the support of the WB governments, especially in the area of e-Government and digitalization with fresh ideas and new initiatives. In that sense, we initiated very intensive communication with Directorate-General for Informatics (DG DIGIT) to support us with some novelties.

ReSPA continues to be a reliable partner to other international organizations with whom we share the same challenges but also the values in these unprecedented times.

We are thankful to our Governance structures, administration representatives and our main partner EC for their understanding, commitment and support to the fulfillment of our mission.

This year will also remain remembered for the most significant achievement – for getting the “Effective CAF-USER” Label, which proves ReSPA’s overall excellent institutional performance. After more than two years of CAF implementation, we have confirmed our devotion and readiness to become the Regional Quality Management Centre in the area of public administration and to position ourselves as the regional CAF Resource Centre.

One of the novelties I am proudest of is the unique Western Balkans Public Administration Awards system which we have initiated jointly with the OECD/SIGMA. An outstanding number of applications showed us so many innovative approaches in the WB public administrations and proved that their prompt reaction to the

Ms Ratka Sekulović, ReSPA Director



Chair of the Governing Board in 2020



Ms Suzana Pribilović,
Minister of Public Administration, Montenegro

Public administration reform is not just a story of administrative reform, it is a key structural reform that should further foster the economy at all levels and in all sectors and stimulate the economic growth through improved competitiveness. The Ministry of Public Administration, for the first time, was established as a new body in the public administration system of Montenegro, so this institutional novelty was a kind of institutional shock, because it imposed a new model of working, monitoring public administration reform, and therefore new obligations. The Ministry of Public Administration, which had fully taken over the management of Public Administration reform, introduced certain changes in the functioning and establishment of standards, procedures, and new practices.

I am proud that in the previous period we have made brave and once unpopular decisions in Montenegro and that the public administration reform had the full support of the Government of Montenegro, but also of international partners. Here, first and foremost, I refer to the European Commission who was with us at every step of this road. As an indispensable part of this cooperation there was the ReSPA team from Montenegro. Such partnership helped to reorganize public administration and reduce the number of bodies, continue with the digitalization of business processes, significantly increase the number of electronic services, start unpopular measures to optimize public administration (The Optimization Plan until 2020 as a key document for the realization of this activity, was made in cooperation with ReSPA), bring the legal solutions to improve the civil service system in Montenegro, introduce personnel planning and link it with

budget planning. For the first time, electronic testing was established during employment in public administration, and stricter procedures for hiring high-ranking staff were introduced.

New legal solutions have been adopted in the field of civil service system, local self-government, state administration and electronic administration in accordance with the best European practices. All this has contributed to increasing the level of citizen satisfaction.

These results did not stop us, rather, they gave us an additional motivation to move on. Guided by the idea that we are doing all this for the sake of the citizens, taking over the presidency of ReSPA in December 2019, Montenegro began with the slogan "Public Administration - Citizen Service" and the focus of our presidency during 2020 was to improve the services of the administration and to make the regional administrations a real service to the citizens.

I take this opportunity to thank all colleagues and partners of ReSPA countries for their trust, institutional cooperation, and always constructive exchange of experiences. ReSPA has proven to be a useful mechanism for regional co-operation in strengthening the public administrations of the Western Balkans, but also a constructive partner. I believe that in the previous period, through these forums and the exchange of experiences, we have greatly contributed to making public administration better and at the service of our citizens. In the end, that's the only thing that matters. That our citizen is satisfied with the services provided by the Public Administration and that each of our employees is aware that "Public Administration - Citizen Service".

European Commission Representative



Mr Florian Hauser,
European Commission



**European
Commission**

ReSPA plays a crucial role as the European Union's partner for building quality of public administration in the Western Balkans region, which is even more salient in these challenging times.

The European Commission is aware of how important and at the same time challenging, the process of public administration reform is. Public administration, in many countries, has struggled even before the crisis caused by COVID-19. Still, this pandemic shows us that in crisis can also lie opportunity, for example to accelerate government digitalization or to make public administrations more agile. Ensuring that public administrations can properly respond to the needs of the citizens and businesses requires continued efforts to build a smarter and more effective civil service.

Public administration represents a vital part of society. Its importance is growing in line with the complexity of the challenges our societies and economies are facing. Without adequate public administration, countries cannot function well. A reliable partner such as ReSPA is crucial for the European Union for supporting the development of strong public administrations and institutions that form a foundation for building resilient economies and societies in the Western Balkans region.

ReSPA's major strength relies on establishing effective collaboration and communication among its Members. ReSPA's peer-to-peer activities and good practice sharing among its members supports them in the implementation of their public administration reform priorities and helps them build efficient and stable administrative systems, structures, and processes that deliver high quality policies and services, based on transparency and integrity. To this end, ReSPA will continue to have the support of the European Commission.

European Commission

Directorate-General Neighbourhood and Enlargement negotiations

Centre of Thematic Expertise on Public Administration Reform

Unit A3 – Thematic support, Economic Development & IFIs, Public Administration Reform

OECD/SIGMA Representative



Dr Gregor Virant,
Head of SIGMA Programme

The partnership between ReSPA and SIGMA (Support for Improvement in Governance and Management, a joint initiative of the OECD and the EU, principally financed by the EU <http://www.sigmaweb.org/>) is very natural. We work in the same professional area of public administration reform and in the same region, just with different mandates. While SIGMA is the “guardian” of the Principles of Public Administration, the assessor of progress and the provider of professional support to EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood administrations, ReSPA plays an important role as a training centre and as a hub for regional co-operation and networking.

In SIGMA, we see ReSPA as an agile and highly relevant regional organisation. We appreciate our

partnership and co-operation and are genuinely interested in ReSPA's training activities, regional studies, meetings of networks and conferences, and gladly participate in these events to share our knowledge and experience.

Public administration reform remains one of the fundamentals of the EU accession process. The quality of public governance is a key factor of competitiveness and has a large impact on quality of life. In the Western Balkans, there is still much work to be done in this field. Therefore, we hope ReSPA will continue its good work in the region and we look forward to continuing our co-operation.

Recently, we have developed a joint initiative – the Western Balkans Public Administration Award. The idea is to collect good public governance practices in the region, to reward the outstanding ones and to disseminate them so that they can inspire others. We hope this will become a tradition, encouraging innovativeness and healthy competition between institutions of public administration in the region.



SIGMA
Creating Change Together



A joint initiative of the OECD and the EU,
principally financed by the EU

1. Executive Summary

Throughout the reporting period from 16 October 2019 until 15 October 2020, ReSPA continued to provide vital support to our administrations and to stay a reliable partner to them, international organisations and European Commission as our leading partner and donor. Although the year 2020 was one of the most challenging ones for ReSPA team due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ReSPA used it as a potential for digital transformation, both within Secretariat and by providing support in a subject area to the beneficiary.

ReSPA organised 35 networking and capacity building actions (a High-Level Policy Dialogue, seminars, seasonal school, workshops, conferences, working visits, training, meetings mobility schemes), with 1067 participant days², and involving 95 international and regional experts (both paid and unpaid), and implemented four regional comparative research projects with PAR policy recommendations.

Over the 90% of participants evaluated content, methodology and relevance of ReSPA actions as excellent/good. The representatives of 65 institutions in the region participated in the regional networking events: 13 from Albania, 20 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 8 from North Macedonia, 11 from Montenegro, 12 from Serbia and 1 from Kosovo*.

As of April 2020, we in ReSPA have switched all our activities online until the end of the year due to the situation with the pandemic. We will continue with face-to-face activities as soon as the situation with the pandemic has stabilised, reflecting the needs of our participants.

Along with the activities we traditionally conduct (such as Working Group meetings, workshops, conferences, seasonal schools, training, etc.) we in ReSPA are devoted to providing the innovative

initiatives and novelties such as establishing Regional Network of Policy Coordinators, enrichment of guidelines for implementation of RIA, organisation of ReSPATHON & Pilots, Designathon & Pilots, etc.

Moreover, we developed Monitoring Toolkit as a ReSPA Monitoring system, which in the years ahead will allow to measure the usage of ReSPA support and set defined indicators at the individual and institutional level systemically and comprehensively.

“I hope that in the near future we will be able to stabilise or we can find a way to combine training online with face to face because online training is exhausting for the eyes, it is difficult to maintain focus when we share an office with several people. On the other hand, face to face training is far more effective, the distractions are eliminated and it is more productive if we are given the opportunity to exchange experience not only during training but on breaks and during the whole experience.” The impression of the anonymous participant from the “Survey about participants’ satisfaction of the Training for Remote management and online facilitation”
15 and 17 September 2020

² The number of participant days is calculated by multiplying the number of registered participants by the number of event days

ReSPA's main achievements in 2020

Institutionalization of ReSPA as the “Regional Quality Management Center” for the Western Balkans

The CAF (Common Assessment Framework) is a quality management system for public administrations, with which employees and managers assess their own organization, determine their strengths and potential for improvement, and subsequently implement improvements. On the other hand, the CAF External Feedback Procedure (PEF), which provides external feedback on the assessment that has taken place with CAF, aims to further support CAF users on their journey towards quality.

The PEF is organized by either a CAF Resource Center or a National Organizer. In case of the Western Balkans, where National Organizers do not exist, it is deemed important to establish (formally) a Regional CAF Resource Center. This role can be fulfilled by ReSPA, within its dimension of a Regional Quality Management (QM) Center which will provide a clear mandate to ReSPA and will position it as a regional center of expertise in quality management and CAF implementation that coordinates with the national quality management units (national coordinators) and serves as a training and consultancy center.

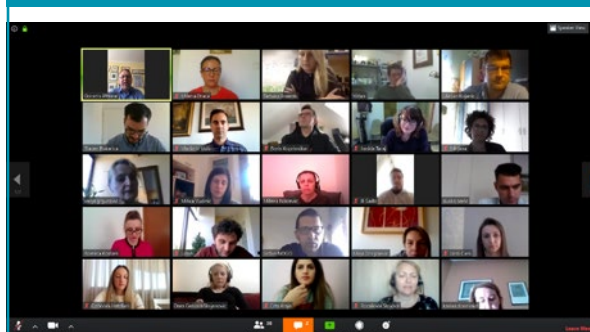
In June 2020, ReSPA was awarded the “Effective CAF-USER” Label as a proof of our overall excellent institutional performance and the implementation of all eight Principles of excellence in the public sector. After more than two years of CAF implementation within ReSPA, the CAF External Feedback procedure has been finished and brought the reflection on ReSPA activities invested so far to become the Regional Quality Management Center (RQMC) for the Western Balkans.

Establishment of the Western Balkans Public Administration Awards

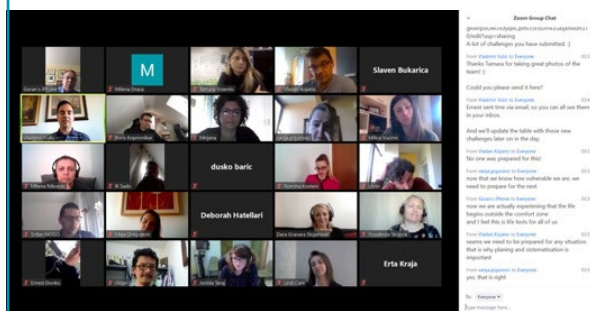


This unique awards system has been initiated jointly with the OECD/SIGMA aimed to enhance initiatives that improve public governance systems in the Western Balkan region. The PA Awards Criteria are related to Better Regulations, Good Governance, Digital Government, Quality Management, Public Administration Reform, Public Financial Management and Human Resources Management and Development.

Establishment of the COVID-19 Western Balkans Digital Collaborative Platform



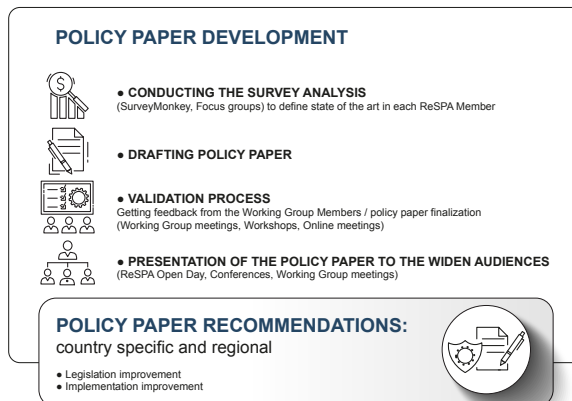
Soon after COVID-19 outbreak ReSPA urgently responded to the pandemic by establishing this online collaborative platform devoted to helping the Western Balkans governments cope better the crisis.



Development of the following policy papers:

- *"The Declaration on Digital Transformation including coordinated response on emergencies"*, which obliged relevant Ministries to benefit further and promote the support provided by ReSPA in digitalisation, e-services and quality management;
- *"The Analysis of Economic and Social Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in Western Balkans administrations"* which analysed the set of measures that all Western Balkans economies introduced, the EU support of the WB economies as well as proposed recommendations for strengthening of the public administrations in a time of crisis;
- *"Zero Open Data Guideline"* with genuine purpose to enhance and optimise the digitalisation of public administrations in the Western Balkans by using open data;
- *"Making Merit Recruitment Work: Lessons from and for the Western Balkans"* with 21 lessons for improvement of merit recruitment in the Western Balkans and framework for the assessment of merit recruitment procedures and practices in each ReSPA member.

Infographic - Methodology of ReSPA policy paper preparation



Development of the ReSPA Monitoring Toolkit

The Monitoring Toolkit assessing the contributions and influence of ReSPA against pre-defined indicators (planned vs expected). The system consists of a monitoring framework and a monitoring toolkit. The monitoring toolkit provides ReSPA's monitoring framework with a list of indicators of outcomes and outputs defined following ReSPA's Programme of Work, with an assessment methodology, measurement criteria for monitoring, and descriptions of sub-indicators and tools for monitoring.

For the first time, the recruitment process has been realized online

As a response to the pandemic, ReSPA Secretariat had the experience of doing online recruitment process for the first time. Electronic testing and stricter online procedures for the employment of the Programme Manager and the Operations and Finance Manager were established and successfully realized.

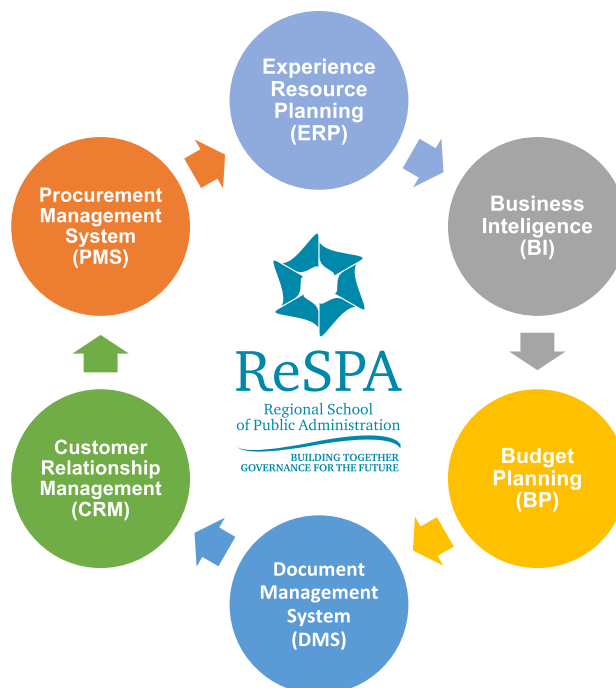
ReSPA awarded "Effective CAF-USER" Label

As proof of our overall excellent institutional performance, the CAF centre of KDZ – Center for Administrative Research awarded our institution with "Effective CAF-USER" Label in June 2020.

This prestigious award comes as a recognition of the commitment and enthusiasm of the entire ReSPA team, after more than two years of CAF implementation within ReSPA.



Inception of the new ReSPA Business Information System



Aimed to cover the following entities: Enterprise resource planning (ERP), Business Intelligence (BI), Budget and planning (BP), Document management system (DMS), Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Procurement management system (PMS), the information system will interconnect the above mentioned entities to support ReSPA's business processes, operations and decision making.

The Information system should enable ReSPA management to ensure proper implementation and control of set processes, real time analysis of variables in support of the decision-making process and future strategic orientation of institutional development. The system will facilitate and optimize capacities of ReSPA to store, organize and analyze data in a comprehensive and reliable manner.

For the first time, the audit process has been realized online

The implementation of independent Audit Services of ReSPA financial statements for the year ended December 2019, and issuance of the Auditors Opinion on the financial statements under the International Standards on Auditing was conducted by KPMG doo Belgrade.

The communication with the Auditor was initiated immediately after the outbreak of COVID-19 to discuss an online mode of document verification. Great enthusiasm and dedication towards completing the online audit organized for the first time, enriched both teams for an experience successfully completed in July 2020.

2. Introduction

This Report covers the actions⁴ implemented from 16 October 2019 to 15 October 2020.

Five ReSPA's Working Groups of Centre-of-Government Institutions, WG on Better Regulation, WG on Human Resources Management and Development, WG on E-Governance and WG on Quality Management) performed most of the planned activities within the above mentioned strategic areas, despite challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. After shifting the activities online as of April 2020 until the end of the year, ReSPA adopted the Programme of Work by the end of the year and finalised the bi-annual Programme of Work 2021-2022 accordingly.

The Programme Committee composed of the representatives of the institutions in charge of PAR, PFM and the EI coordination process, established last year to perform structured coordination and the representation of the key actors/institutions of ReSPA Members, provided more strategic guidance for ReSPA's actions.



The first meeting of ReSPA Programme Committee,
16-17 October 2019, Ohrid, North Macedonia

Public Administration Reform (PAR) is a very complex issue and requires strong engagement and political will. ReSPA, as a key regional endeavour in PAR, will continue to support its Members and to equip them with new skills and knowledge. Apart from traditionally recognised activities, we will offer some innovative solutions and interventions to get public administrations from the Western Balkan region much closer to the EU membership, which is the ultimate goal for all.

⁴ We shall use the term action instead of activity throughout the report for the following reason. Although activity and action look alike an activity is when our doing does not produce an outcome by itself while an action produces specific tangible results.



ReSPA continued to strengthen its cooperation with the governing structures, Working group Members and other actors relevant for the implementation of the actions that have been organised following the ReSPA 2019-2020 Programme of Work and the ReSPA Strategy for 2019-2024. The Strategy focuses on the improvement of the ReSPA Members' performance in key horizontal governance and public administration reform fields identified in the respective national PAR strategies of the ReSPA members, national PAR Action Plans, mainly through in-country support. It presents the collective endeavour by ReSPA staff, Governing Board and Working groups' members, the Advisory Board and the European Commission.

In January 2020, the Government of Montenegro adopted the Decision on termination of the Contract on Granting the Right of Use of Premises, Equipment, Hotel Facility in Danilovgrad and Surrounding Land to ReSPA (concluded on 29 April 2015) by which ReSPA premises will move to Podgorica. The Property Administration (PA) undertook the obligation to ensure adequate new premises in Podgorica for the needs of ReSPA free of charge, and to submit a written termination of the agreement on the use of

premises in Danilovgrad, and to conclude the handover contract for the new premises with ReSPA. The formal handover will take place after the relocation of ReSPA staff to new premises in Podgorica, to use the existing furniture and equipment.

The speed of the handover is slower than planned, due to the present situation with the pandemic. It is hard to predict the dynamics of the next steps. At the GB SL meeting, held on 2 October 2020, GB Member from Montenegro expressed hope that this issue will be solved by the end of this year.

ReSPA Secretariat is reinforced by the four new members. The Communication and Visibility Officer has joined ReSPA team as of March, while the Programme Manager (Legal) has joined as of July 2020. The Programme Manager and Finance Manager will join ReSPA team at the beginning of November. The latest additions to our team will certainly contribute to further development of ReSPA as well as strengthening its influence in the region as the EC's reliable partner in implementing PAR in the Western Balkans.



10th ReSPA Governing Board
11 November 2019



Ms Ratka Sekulović,
ReSPA Director



Mr Damjan Mančevski, Minister of Information Society and Administration of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia transferred the ReSPA flag to Ms Suzana Pribilović, Minister of Public Administration of the Government of Montenegro

10th ReSPA Governing Board

At 10th ReSPA Governing Board meeting at the Ministerial level held on 11 November 2019 in Skopje, North Macedonia, the ReSPA Governing Board adopted Annual Report for 2019, Budget 2020-2021 and Envelope for the Core Budget for 2020.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the 2019 Governing Board Chair, Mr Damjan Mančevski, Minister of Information Society and Administration of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia handed-over chairmanship and presented the ReSPA flag to Ms Suzana Pribilović, Minister of Public Administration of the Government of Montenegro and the Chair of the ReSPA Governing Board at Ministerial level in 2020.

The meeting was attended by the ministers responsible for public administration and high officials from ReSPA Members, representatives of the European Union, ReSPA Director and ReSPA Secretariat.

3. Implementation of the ReSPA Strategy 2019-2024

Implementation of the ReSPA Strategy 2019-2024 started in May 2019, coinciding with the beginning of the EC Grant Contract implementation and continued for this year's reporting period.

At the beginning of this year's reporting period, the first *Programme Committee meeting* was held aimed to familiarise its members and other participants with goals, objectives and purposes of establishment of Programme Committee, the ReSPA Programme of Work 2019-2020, the current challenges and achievements in PAR in ReSPA Members, as well as the role of public administration in the process of EU accession negotiation.

Until March 2020, ReSPA has realised activities according to the Programme of Work. Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, ReSPA, like many other institutions over the globe, postponed most of the activities during March 2020 and shifted them online by the end of the year. It caused the adoption of the Programme of Work activities by the end of the year and finalising the bi-annual Programme of Work 2021- 2022 accordingly.

Soon after the COVID-19 outbreak, *ReSPA has established a unique COVID-19 Western Balkans Digital Collaborative Platform* to support WB public administrations cope better amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The first online conference held on 16 April 2020, detected the key challenges that digital service teams have been facing highlighted the twenty essential that needed to be addressed. The second online conference held on 4 May 2020, explored new ways of convening, talking and learning as agile support to WB governments in overcoming the detected challenges caused by the pandemic. To emphasise priorities in the resolving of the detected institutional challenges, ReSPA has

launched an online survey to detect the most appropriate forms of intervention as a response to their needs in overcoming the pandemic, resulting with Multi-Sectoral Analysis including ReSPA Working Groups and Programming Committee. The third online conference held on 13 May 2020 was organised as a workshop entitled "How to become an effective Remote Manager" and devoted to supporting the WB region in remote management. The fourth online conference held on 28 May 2020, was organised as a webinar in which the world-known expert John O'Duinn introduced the idea and philosophy of Distributed and Open Digital team concept.

The regional context of the conferences has been enriched by OECD, CEFTA, RCC, CHHS and many other institutions from Slovenia, EU, USA, etc.

As additional support to the WB governments in the crisis caused by the pandemic, ReSPA initiated the development of the study "*Analysis of Economic and Social Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in Western Balkans administrations*" to provide WB administrations with the key information and recommendations for the strengthening of the WB public administrations in the time of crisis.

For the first time, ReSPA conducted the *Western Balkans Public Administration Awards*. This unique endeavour organised jointly with OECD/SIGMA aims to enhance initiatives that improve public governance systems and to highlight the most effective and efficient practices among the WB governments. The PA Awards Criteria are related to Better Regulations, Good Governance, Digital Government, Quality Management, Public Administration Reform, Public Financial Management and Human Resources Management and Development. This year, due to the pandemic, the Awards highlighted

government efforts that advance, promote and anchor innovative, effective, inclusive and adaptable tools and systems in the Western Balkans public administrations to deal with the pandemic and extraordinary situations.

In September 2020, ReSPA developed *"The Declaration on Digital Transformation, including coordinated response on emergencies"*, which obliged relevant Ministries to benefit further and promote support provided by ReSPA in digitalisation, e-services and quality management.

In June 2020 the *"Zero Open Data Guideline"* has been finalized. The objective of Zero Open Data Guidelines design is to offer the national administrations coherent definitions, standards and guidelines for Open Data, customised to the needs of our region. The activity started in December 2019 and the Draft document has been made in June 2020. So beyond a short explanation of what is considered public open data, what makes data open and why it is important, the guidelines would emphasise on the comparative review of the current state of affairs in the Western Balkans administrations. The guidelines provided operational support for the creation of comparable open data initiatives on the national levels. Sharing perspectives would directly contribute to the realisation of Open Data agendas and Actions Plans made by the national governments in the region. This report would be a precondition for further Open Data development on the national and possibly regional level.

During the reporting period, ReSPA continued to **initiate and support of peer to peer learning exchanges** among experts from national institutions of the countries in the region by organising three Mobility schemes.

Senior officials of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its entities who are in charge of regulatory impact assessment visited the Public Policy Secretariat of the Republic of Serbia where discussed on Presentation of the Program for Simplification of Administrative Procedures and Regulations and Action plan for the implementation of the Program of the Republic of Serbia; Steps in making recommendations for optimising administrative procedures; Experiences and challenges in harmonising proposals for simplification (method of coordination) and discussion; Example on particular administrative procedure and Process experiences and recommendations.

The second online Mobility scheme was organised between HRMA from Montenegro

and Department of Public Administration (DoPA) from Albania on the Recruitment System in the Albanian Civil Service.

Due to the pandemic, instead of organising a mobility scheme, ReSPA organised an online meeting on 30 July which gathered the representatives of HRMA, Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro, who were virtually hosted by their colleagues from DoPA (Albania). During the meeting, the representatives from Albania presented the e-platform with its functionalities, software solution and the steps in the recruitment process.

A new strategic document on public administration reform is being prepared in Montenegro, and this was considered as a possibility for creating an employment platform. In Montenegro, they are currently reforming merit-based recruitment system, introducing competencies for senior management, introducing electronic testing of candidates, as well as some other novelties. Albania was recognised as a country with good practice example that was worth learning from. Albania proved to be a lead country in e-recruitment not only in the Western Balkans but also in Europe.

Third Peer-mission was organised as a workshop on Public Participation which gathered the representatives of Ministry of Justice of BiH, Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship of the Republika Srpska, and Office of the Government of Federation of BiH for legislation and Harmonisation with EU regulations. The participants got familiar with the functioning of the public consultation systems in Bosnia and Herzegovina particularly in organising public participation process. Also, the ReSPA consultant presented to the audience the best regional and international practices in the area.

Additionally, ReSPA continued to provide the support it Members through **"In-country support mechanism"**.

Development of the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) Learning Management System

In November 2019 NAPA requested from ReSPA assistance in an extension of NAPA Learning Management System (LMS) through the Development of additional modules: Program Compiler Module and LMS Planning Module. These two additional modules should enable the automatisisation of Programme preparation and Training monthly plan development.

In 2018 ReSPA supported setting of an interactive online platform of NAPA enabling application of e-services such as online registration of trainees at NAPA courses, automatic distribution of information, information on training curriculums, information on trainers/lecturers, as well as a link to e-Learning courses of NAPA.



The Ministry of Public Administration within the Government of Montenegro which is coordinating the process of Development of the information society and in cooperation with other ministries (responsible for creating an environment that will facilitate other institutions to implement digitalisation projects) has initiated the in-country mechanism. ReSPA engaged an expert who supported the Ministry of Public Administration and the Government of Montenegro to put in place an effective provision of e-services and transformation of business processes in public administration in Montenegro regarding digitalisation and e-government process.

Recently, ReSPA has received a new applications from Albania (submitted by National Authority for Electronic Certification and Cyber Security that relates to the cybersecurity of critical infrastructure has been approved, and preparatory activities have been undertaken) and Republic of Serbia (submitted by the Ministry of Public Administration and Local-Self Government that relates to preparation of the comparative analysis of good practices (EU and Western Balkans) on the role of HR Units in strategic management within State administration).

By implementing its actions, ReSPA stays devoted to the contribution to the effective response of the WB public administrations to the needs of citizens and businesses, focusing on strengthened regional cooperation in the fields of PAR and EUI and contributing to the achievement the following specific objectives:

- Improved implementation of PAR and PFM strategies in the Western Balkans;
- Improved professionalisation (and depoliticisation) of the public service;
- Improved service delivery;
- Establishment of ReSPA as a Regional Quality Management Centre.

This Report presents the **Direct Output Indicators (DOIs)**⁵ which provide a direct view of the quantity of ReSPA's work and its quality as perceived by the immediate beneficiaries. A more in-depth assessment of the quality of this work will be attained through assessments based on the induced outputs' indicators and their link with the outcomes in the Intervention Logic.

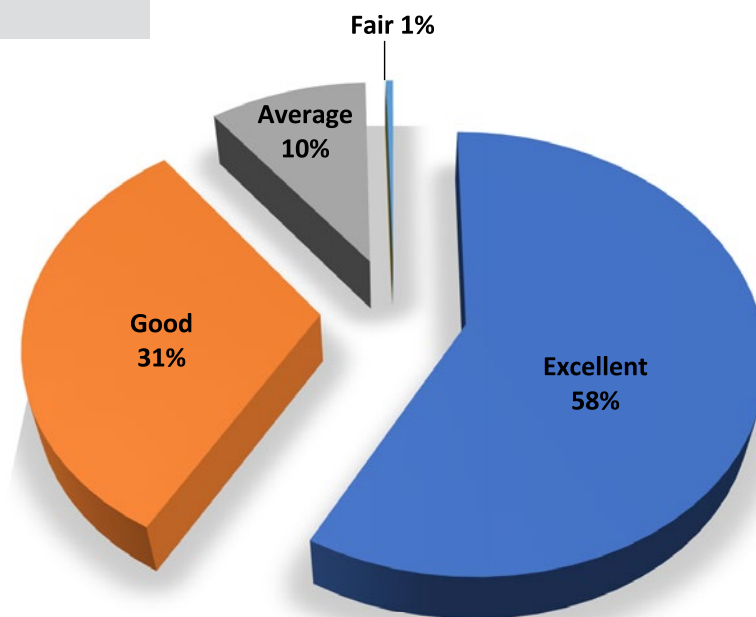
⁵ Direct Output Indicators (DOIs) measure the coverage (in terms of staff, themes, countries, etc.) of the networks, exchanges, lessons, skills, policy recommendations, etc. produced by ReSPA and their quality as perceived by the direct users/participants/beneficiaries

Strengthening PA Capacity within ReSPA's Purview

% of persons who have enhanced their skills, knowledge, awareness of the following thematic areas

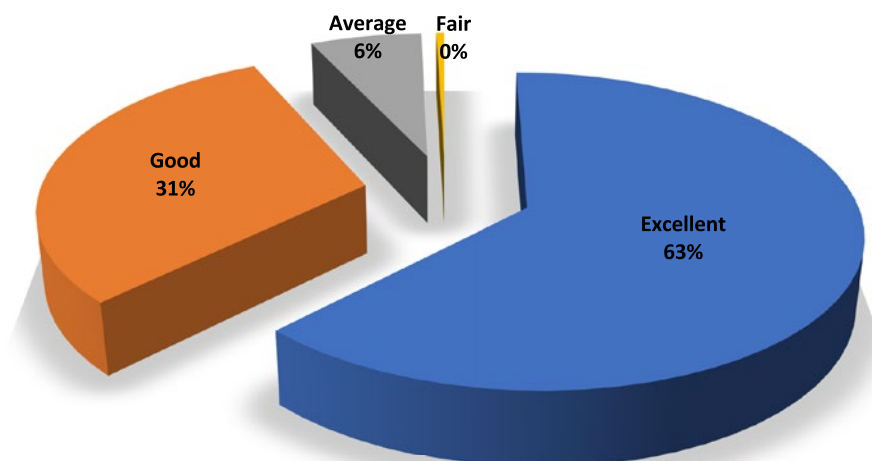
89 percent of all the participants who filled the evaluation forms evaluated the content of ReSPA actions as excellent/good

Content



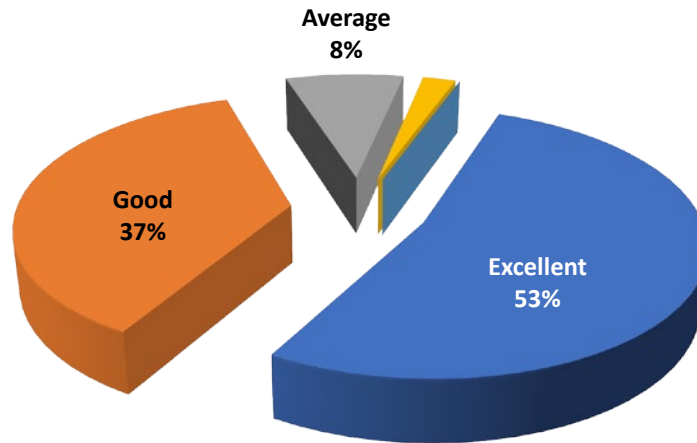
94 percent of all the participants evaluated the applied methodology as excellent/good

Methodology



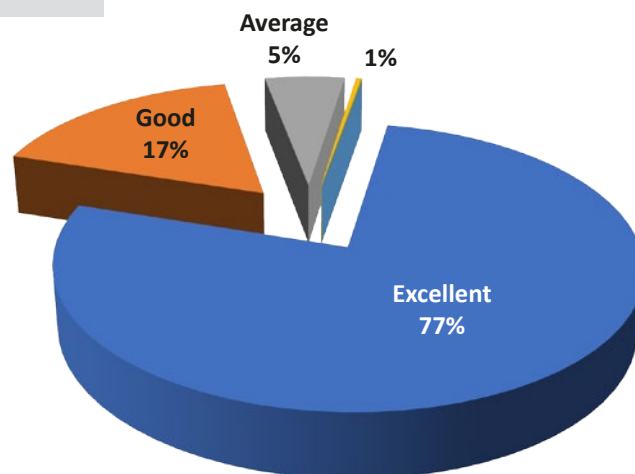
91 percent of all the participants evaluated the relevance of the ReSPA actions as excellent/good

Relevance



92 percent of all the participants evaluated the relevance of the ReSPA actions as excellent/good

Organisation



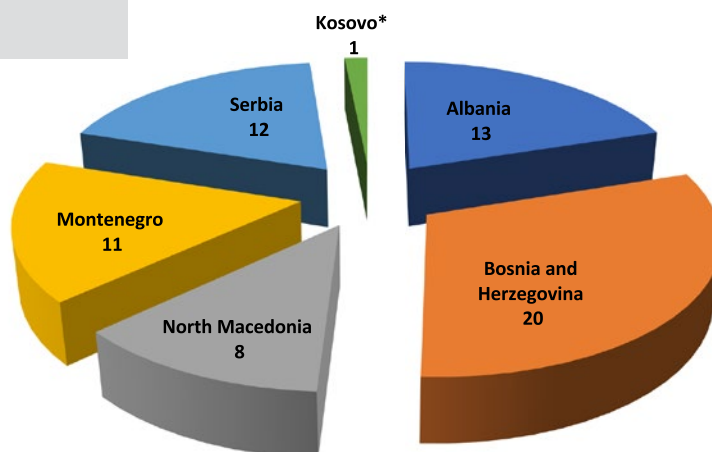
The participants in the *Seasonal School on Rapid Innovation Lab 2020* held in September-October mastered skills they have deemed as of utmost value and interest such as Strengths Finder, Human Ware, Human-Centred Change Management, Agile, Iterative Methodologies & Mindset, Product & Quality Management, Resilience & Wellbeing, Remote teams, Crisis Communication, Data Science & Journalism.

No of institutions in the region represented at regional networking events

65 institutions

During the reporting period, representatives of 65 institutions in the region participated in the regional networking events: 13 from Albania, 20 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 8 from North Macedonia, 11 from Montenegro, 12 from Serbia and 1 from Kosovo*.

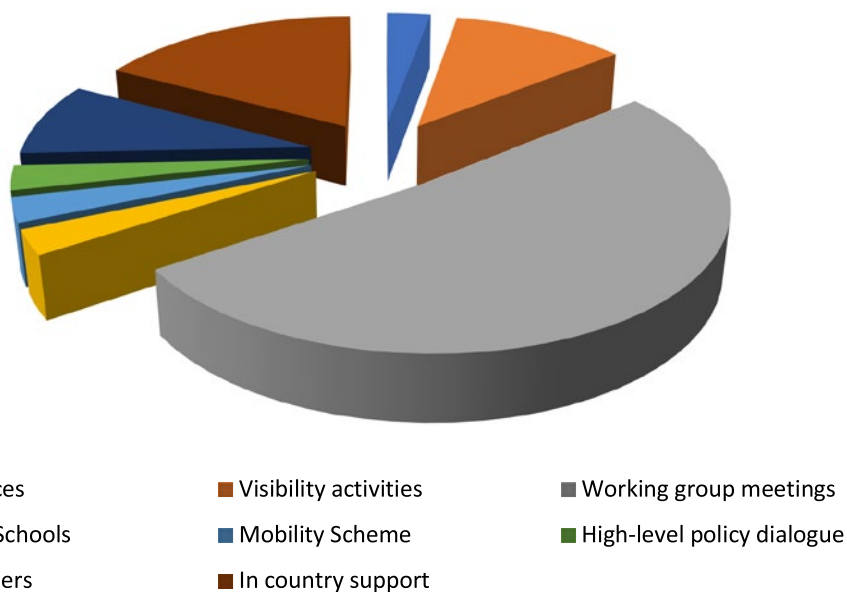
Institutions



No of exchanges and cooperation activities

35 networking and capacity building actions
ReSPA has organized (High-Level Policy Dialogue, seminars, Seasonal School, workshops, conferences, working visits, training, meetings mobility schemes), with 1067 participant days and involving 95 international and regional experts (both paid and unpaid), and implemented four regional comparative research projects with PAR policy recommendations.

ReSPA Actions



| Institutionalization of ReSPA as the “Regional Quality Management Centre”

The CAF (Common Assessment Framework) is a quality management system for public administrations, with which employees and managers assess their own organization, determine their strengths and potential for improvement, and subsequently implement improvements. On the other hand, the CAF External Feedback Procedure (PEF), which provides external feedback on the assessment that has taken place with CAF, aims to further support CAF users on their journey towards quality.

The PEF is organized by either a *CAF Resource Center* or a *National Organizer*. In case of the Western Balkans, where National Organizers do not exist, it is deemed important to establish (formally) a Regional CAF Resource Center. This role can be fulfilled by ReSPA, within its dimension of a Regional Quality Management (QM) Center which will provide a clear mandate to ReSPA and will position it as a regional center of expertise in quality management and CAF implementation that coordinates with the national quality management units (national coordinators) and serves as a training and consultancy center.

The *Feasibility Study on the establishment of the ReSPA QM Regional Centre* in 2018 led to the initiation of the establishment of the Centre during 2018; the introduction of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) at the ReSPA Secretariat in 2018; capacity building of ReSPA staff for using CAF through training as well as working visits to the organisations practising CAF; piloting CAF in the Western Balkan region (as of early 2019).

After more than two years of CAF implementation within ReSPA, the CAF External Feedback procedure has been finished in June 2020. Due to the COVID-19 situation, the process has been transformed into online and required intensive consultations during March, April and May 2020.

The Procedure of External Feedback (PEF) process validated the results of all the efforts done by ReSPA in the domain of CAF implementation. It engaged two independent PEF experts, who did the essential analysis, including the interviews with ReSPA staff and ReSPA stakeholders i.e.

ReSPA multifunctional team composed of different profiles as well as with one number of ReSPA Governing structures representatives

In June 2020, ReSPA was awarded the “Effective CAF-USER” Label as a proof of our overall excellent institutional performance and the implementation of all eight Principles of excellence in the public sector. After more than two years of CAF implementation within ReSPA, the CAF External Feedback procedure has been finished and brought the reflection on ReSPA activities invested so far to become the Regional Quality Management Center (RQMC) for the Western Balkans.

Testimonials



Thomas Prorok

*KDZ - Zentrum für Verwaltungsforschung,
Centre for Public Administration Research
Deputy Managing Director*

“ReSPA is our key partner for the implementation of CAF in Western Balkan and to improve the quality of public administration.”

3.1. Improved Implementation of PAR and PFM Strategies

Ministerial Dialogue gathered distinguished participants – ReSPA Governing Board Members at Ministerial Level, representatives of the EU Commission, senior officials and experts.

In her welcoming address, Ms Ratka Sekulović, ReSPA Director, introduced the participants with the novelties in ReSPA. Mr Florian Hauser, Team Leader at Unit A3, Directorate-General Neighbourhood and Enlargement negotiations, EC confirmed ReSPA's position as an important partner to the EU and highlighted the importance of the collaboration and communication among Western Balkans as a precondition of developing interoperable and supportive PA systems.

As ReSPA's response to the COVID-19 outbreak, ReSPA organised eleven online meetings, which gathered members of the Centre of Government and Better Regulation Working Groups, aiming at finding the most appropriate forms of ReSPA potential interventions and response to their needs in overcoming the challenges caused

by the pandemic by emphasising the potential of the "in-country support mechanism". By the proactive approach of WG members, after defining the needs ReSPA updated plan of activities by the end of the year.

Some previously planned activities which cannot be shifted online ReSPA postponed were postponed and they will be realised after situations with the pandemic stabilise:

- Working Visit of PC and CoG working group to the Government of the Republic of Estonia (originally planned for 7 April) and a joint meeting of PC and CoG working group planned for 6 April;
- Seminar on Monitoring and Reporting of Public Policies, planned for 28 April;
- Panel on RIA of our Better Regulation working group at NISPAcee annual conference, envisaged for 14 May.

Coordination of PAR and PFM policies

High-Level Ministerial dialogue, 8 September 2020, online

ReSPA's expert introduced the "Analysis of Economic and Social Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Western Balkan Administrations" which examines the effects of the health crisis to the WB economies emphasising that the pandemic has severe consequences as both aggregate supply and aggregate demand contract simultaneously. Closing the border and stopping travel significantly reduced external demand, on which WB economies significantly depend while Tourism has collapsed.

ReSPA also presented the "Draft Declaration on Digital Transformation of the WB Ministries for Public Administration Including Coordinated Response on Emergency Situations". Based on this draft Declaration, the administrations of the Western Balkans region pledge to cooperate on four levels:

- *Organisational level:* through the establishment of a collaborative online platform for a

share of know-how and joint initiatives;

- *Ecosystem:* Processes and products established through the optimisation in Public administration and public services;
- *Data:* data quality, identification of data sources and their safe sharing through a common platform;
- *Infrastructure development:* communication tools, cybersecurity mechanisms, enforcing GDPR, Privacy in line with EU regulations;

The Draft Declaration has been endorsed by ReSPA Governing Board on Ministerial level on 6 November 2020.



The first meeting of ReSPA Programme Committee, 16-17 October 2019, Ohrid, North Macedonia

Aimed to effectively exchange the state of play, targeted goals, priorities, and examples of success stories in the domain of PAR and the European Integration process among participants, the meeting also familiarised them with the ReSPA Programme of Work 2019-2020 and the current challenges and achievements in PAR in ReSPA Members.

During the meeting, ReSPA's prominent partners such as OECD/SIGMA, CEF and RAI presented their activities and potentials for further collaborations in the area of PAR and PFM. SIGMA presented the initiative of Development of Government at the Glance study for Western Balkan countries. Also, particular experiences of Montenegro related to coordination of public policies was presented.



Coordination meeting with ReSPA Liaison Officers 25 February 2020, Budva, Montenegro

ReSPA Secretariat highlighted the role of ReSPA Liaison Officers in the implementation of activities planned for 2020, especially in the implementation of In-country support mechanisms, Peer-to-Peer mechanisms, and Mobility schemes.

The meeting also reveals the role of Liaison Officers in the monitoring of ReSPA activities and sharing experience and challenges in collecting reports on the implementation of recommendations defined in ReSPA baseline studies and regionally comparative studies.



Policy paper on Coordination of public policies

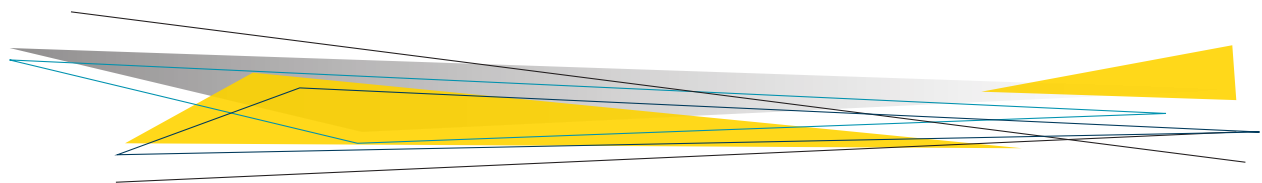
Being aware that one of the key challenges for governmental institutions across the Western Balkans is the creation of linkages between planning and financial affordability of policies, ReSPA already developed and published in all local languages a Methodological concrete guide for cost of the Government strategies. Hence, to continue support in overcoming the main challenges related to decreasing fragmentation of public policies and improvement of the coordination of public policies, analytical paper on policy coordination, in general, aims to develop the role of public administration institutions in improvement of coordination among public policies. The analytical paper shall provide concrete examples of coordination between PAR and PFM strategies.

The draft of the Policy Paper will be composed of a general overview of the state of art as regards policy coordination in Western Balkans, coordination models, mechanisms & best practices, as well as a dedicated section for the current situation in each country, including challenges encountered and recommendations. In this regard, the expert prepared a very comprehensive questionnaire on which around 40 high ranked public servants, responsible for various aspects of policy coordination in their governments, provided responses during May and June 2020. These responses were a basis for in-depth discussion organised through online

thematic workshops from 21 until 23 September with more than 40 representatives from Western Balkan countries. At these workshops, the expert provided a thorough presentation of the initial version of the Paper as well as of the specific situation of policy coordination in each of the administrations of the WB, which was followed by a lively discussion among the participants who provided their views, inputs, and suggestions on the Paper. The discussion was mainly focused on the role of Centre of Governments, and Line Ministries shall have during the policy development, strategic planning and reform coordination. The participants had the opportunity to discuss the latest changes or amendments, to underlying problems and the reasoning behind the changes that countries are faced during the comprehensive process of public administration reforms.

Along with the Members of the working groups Centre of Government and Better Regulation, the workshops were also attended by the ReSPA Programme Committee and the officials involved in the completion of the specific questionnaire used for the drafting of the study.

A consolidated draft of the Analytical Paper will be ready by November 2020, which will be followed by a regional workshop where best regional practices will be introduced, and specific recommendations will be provided.



Mobility Scheme for officials of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Public Policy Secretariat of the Republic of Serbia, 14-15 November 2019, Belgrade, Serbia

It was organised for the senior officials of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its entities who are in charge of regulatory impact assessment and included their visit to the Public Policy Secretariat of the Republic of Serbia. The following topics were discussed: Presentation of the Program for Simplification of Administrative Procedures and Regulations and Action plan for the implementation of the Program of the Republic of Serbia; Steps in making recommendations for optimising administrative procedures; Experiences and challenges in harmonising recommendations for simplification (method of coordination) and discussion; Example on particular administrative procedure and Process experiences and recommendations.



Quality of policy planning in the Centre of Government institutions

Working Visit for the members of the Working Group of Centre-of-Government and Policy Coordination to the Government of Latvia, 20-21 November 2019, Riga, Latvia

The members of the WG of CoG and PC visited the State Chancellery and the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre of the Latvian Government. The two institutions perform the key Centre-of-Government functions within the administration. The following themes were in details explored: Public administration reform plan 2020 with ten directions for efficient, responsible and flexible public administration; Top-level civil service - selection and development; Innovations in public administration (3 public sector innovation labs – Administrative Simplification; Strategic HR Management; Branding and Reputation); Open government, values & ethics and whistleblowing; Public participation in decision-making; Latvian Development Planning System and policy impact assessment; Linking budget planning with development planning and development goals; and Integration of the UN Sustainable Development Goals into the Latvian planning system and national policies.



Alignment of policy making and legal drafting with the EU Better Regulation Agenda

Peer-mission on Public Participation, 13-14 February, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

During the workshop, participants got familiar with the functioning of the public consultation systems in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The representatives of Ministry of Justice of BiH, Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship of the Republika Srpska, and Office of the Government of Federation of BiH for legislation and Harmonisation with EU regulations presented their achievements in organising public participation process. Afterwards, the ReSPA consultant presented to the audience the best regional and international practices in the area.

Participants' interactive approach led to a dynamic discussion pointed out by the exchange of experience, with particular reference to the advantages and disadvantages of various models and practices of public consultation in the region. Part of the vibrant discussion was devoted to models of public participation in the area of European Integrations and Accession Negotiation process with EU. At the end of the Peer-mission, the participants were informed on future ReSPA activities devoted to supporting Better regulation area as a very significant area in the public administration reform process.

3.2. Improved Professionalisation and Depolitisation of the Senior Civil Services

ReSPA continued its work in supporting its members on their respective ways to reaching this objective through, among others, preparation of two documents, one related to merit recruitment and the other to performance appraisal. Based on the study ReSPA produced in 2015⁷ which evaluated the formal-legal frameworks regulating merit-recruitment in the civil service, as well as the quality of their implementation, and the study produced in 2018⁸ which focused on change in formal rules and implementation practice between 2015 and 2018⁸, ReSPA produced a draft study *Making Merit Recruitment Work: Lessons from and for the Western Balkans* with a self-assessment framework. The study presents 21 lessons, both positive and negative, and explores their application in practice. For each ReSPA Member based on the identified lessons in the framework, reports were prepared to provide a state of art as well as recommendations for follow up activities.

The baseline analysis on *Individual Performance Appraisal of Employees in Central Public Administration in the Western Balkans*⁹ produced in 2018 created ground for the development of a draft Review study - Towards effective performance appraisal in the Western Balkans: How to develop performance? This is a user friendly document which could serve for improvement of the performance appraisal in ReSPA Members. The document is accompanied with a check list of the steps that are recommended to be followed in this process. The document will be finalised by the end of 2020.

ReSPA continued to support its members in the exchange of experience among them but also in exchange of experience with the EU countries. HRMD WG had an opportunity to pay a visit and learn from the Finish Institute of Public Administration (HAUS). What heavily marked this period was pandemic which prompted ReSPA to provide a platform for the exchange of experience among the ReSPA members on actions undertaken to mitigate the pandemic and issues that it imposed.

Also, ReSPA strengthened the capacities of civil servants on remote management and online facilitation through organising capacity-building activities.

⁷ Meyer-Sahling, J.-H.; Mikkelsen K.S.; Ahmetovic, D.; Ivanova, M.; Qeriqi, H.; Radevic, R.; Shundi, A.; Vlajkovic, V. (2015) *Improving the Implementation of Merit Recruitment Procedures in the Western Balkans: Analysis and Recommendations*. Danilovgrad: ReSPA Publications.. <https://www.respaweb.eu/11/library#humane-resources-management-and-development-7>

⁸ Meyer-Sahling, J.-H.; Mikkelsen K.S.; Schuster, C., Bartula-Musikic, R., Ahmetovic, D.; Ivanova, M.; Qeriqi, H.; Radevic, R.; Shundi, A.; Vlajkovic, V. (2019) *Merit Recruitment in the Western Balkans: An Evaluation of Change between 2015 and 2018*. Danilovgrad: ReSPA Publications. <https://www.respaweb.eu/11/library#humane-resources-management-and-development-7>

⁹ Staroňová K.; Ahmetovic, D.; Ivanova, M.; Qeriqi, H.; Radevic, R.; Shundi, A.; Vlajkovic, V. (2018) *Individual Performance Appraisal of Employees in Central Public Administration in the Western Balkans*. Danilovgrad: ReSPA Publications. <https://www.respaweb.eu/11/library#humane-resources-management-and-development-7>

Merit-based recruitment and selection

Working visit for the members of HRMD WG, 10-12 December 2019, Helsinki, Finland

As a continuation of the experience exchange, ReSPA Human Resources Management and Development Working group (HRMD WG) visited Finland and learned about Finnish civil service that has been recognised as a service with inspiring practice cases that Western Balkan countries could learn from. The visit was hosted by HAUS, Finnish Institute of Public Management. During the three-day working visit, fifteen HRMD WG members had the opportunity to exchange experience about the implementation of competency frameworks, performance appraisal, leadership programmes, talent management, innovations in HRMD, changing HRM through using digital technology, etc.

ReSPA staff had a meeting in the Prime Minister's office and were presented with their work. Trust is a fundamental and guiding value in the Development of Finnish public governance. Successful reforms are possible only if citizens trust the public governance and people in government trust citizens.

ReSPA also had a meeting with DEMOS an independent think-tank from Helsinki, that works together with the public sector, private sector, and NGOs. Both works of ReSPA and DEMOS were presented, and potential ideas were explored about future partnership and collaboration.

On 12 December 2019, the last day of the visit to Helsinki, an internal meeting of the HRMD WG was held with a focus on the establishment of the ReSPA M&E system and activities planned for 2020.



Making Merit Recruitment Work: Lesson from and for the Western Balkans

This study drew broader lessons from the Western Balkans for the Western Balkans on how to make merit-based recruitment work more effectively. Twenty-one lessons are derived from good practices that can be identified across the region and from gaps and obstacles to implementation that became evident when conducting the in-depth evaluations of merit recruitment. The lessons are clustered along with five areas of recruitment (i) the scope for the application of merit recruitment procedures, (ii) the conditions for the opening of positions, (iii)

the public advertisement of vacant positions, (iv) the formation and role of selection commissions, and (v) the examination and final selection of candidates. The lessons are integrated into a framework for the assessment of merit recruitment procedures and practices in ReSPA members. The framework is conceived as a self-assessment tool that allows ReSPA members to reflect on their recruitment practices, to identify gaps, learn from their neighbours and initiate exchanges with them.

The study also elaborates briefly how COVID-19 affected recruitment situation in the Western Balkans. The study recommends that it should be a priority for several countries in the Western Balkans to establish functioning human resources management information systems, including central portals for the online management of civil service recruitment. In many respects, it is the starting point for the management of the recruitment process. If set up properly it allows and facilitates these subsequent examination and selection of candidates.

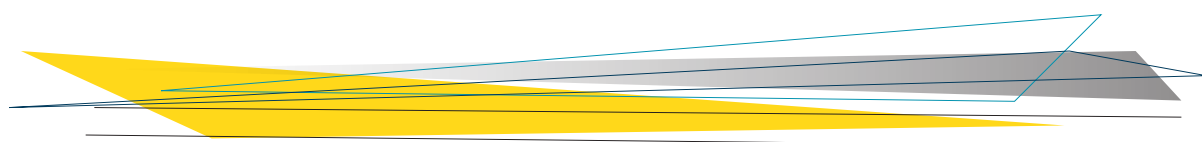
The study proves that the reform and institutionalisation of merit-based recruitment is a complex undertaking that requires time and a favourable political and economic context. In particular, it cannot succeed without sustained political commitment and the willingness of political elites to appreciate the benefits of merit recruitment for the Development of their nations.

For each ReSPA member, the authors of the study and the members of the ReSPA Working Group on HRM in the public sector met (online) and discussed the application of the 21 lessons to their context, the gaps that were evident, and the actions that should be taken in order to improve the effectiveness of merit recruitment.

Eight online meetings were organised in total on 2 and 3 July. The self assessment-check lists for 2020 provide for each country state of art in merit recruitment and recommendations for improvement as per each of 21 lessons. The self-assessment check-lists are conceived as 'living' documents that are meant to be consulted and updated on a regular, for instance, annual basis.

In-country support mechanism - Development of the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) Learning Management System

In 2018 ReSPA supported setting of an interactive online platform of NAPA enabling application of e-services such as online registration of trainees at NAPA courses, automatic distribution of information, information on training curriculums, information on trainers/lecturers, as well as a link to e-Learning courses of NAPA. In November 2019 NAPA requested from ReSPA assistance in extension of NAPA Learning Management System (LMS) through Development of additional modules: Program Compiler Module and LMS Planning Module. These two additional modules should enable automatisisation of Programme preparation and Trainings monthly plan development.



Online workshop on management at a distance, 23 May 2020

The online workshop on management at a distance was organised as a response to the pandemic situation. ReSPA and the Public One GmbH from Berlin organised an online workshop on "How to become an effective Remote Manager" aimed at presenting a remote management tool for coping better amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The workshop gathered 15 participants, members of the HRMD Working Group as well as the Governing Board at Senior Level. They were introduced to many important aspects of managing workforce remotely, which has become one of the main topics worldwide in these challenging times.

Meeting of the HRMD WG, 23 May 2020

The online workshop on management distance was followed by the online meeting of the HRMD Working Group, during which the 14 participants identified some common challenges and needs related to remote human management.

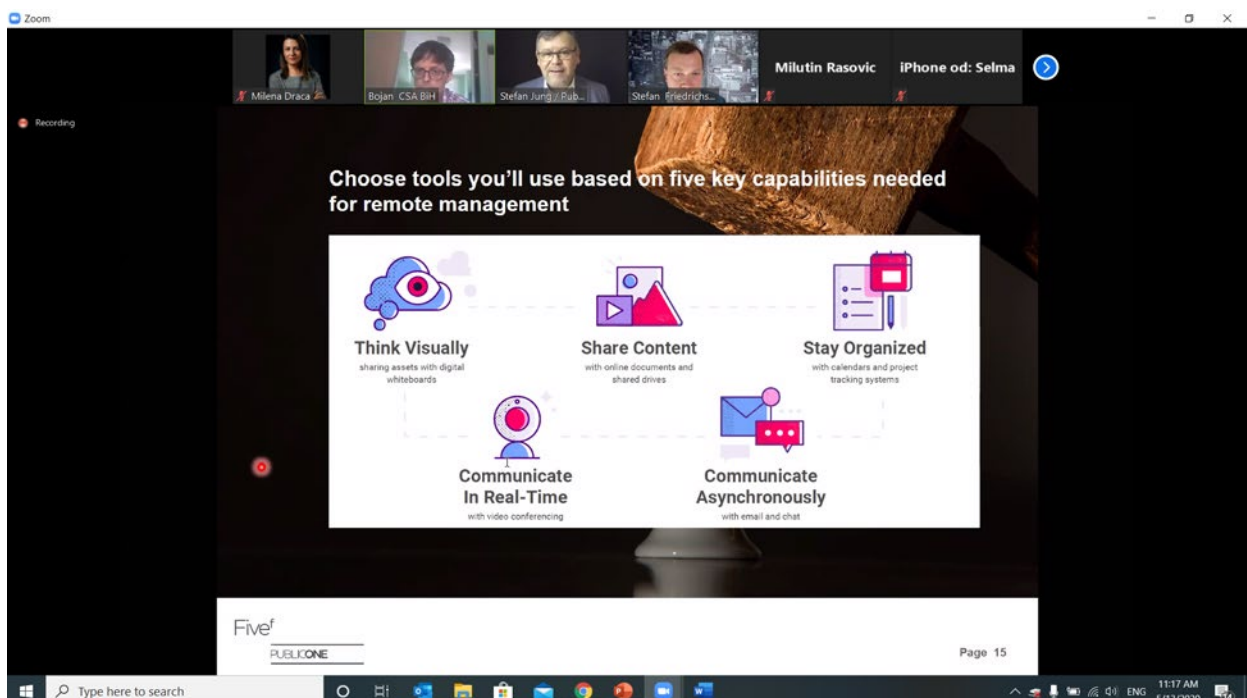
At the beginning of the working meeting, ReSPA presented the COVID-19 Western Balkans Digital Collaborative platform as ReSPA's unique response to the pandemic. This time, the HRMD WG members pointed out some common key issues, challenges and needs related to human resources management that need to be addressed: merit-based recruitment during emergencies, challenges in organising work from home and conducting performance appraisal, potential shifts in training needs and organisation of professional development events.



Five F method offers managers, leaders and teams a simple framework for reflection and self-assessment

During the meeting, the members of the HRMD WG underlined that most of the existing HR procedures require physical contact, which is not possible in situations like COVID-19 or any other crisis situation. That is why there is a need for a change in the procedures.

Some other WB countries' issues discussed were: the need for changes in legislative frameworks (they need to be modified and adopted with a focus on e-recruitment procedure), active involvement of employees who resist to changes and online work caused by this situation, use of proper tools and methods for motivating employees to finalise tasks successfully, etc.



Five F method offers managers, leaders and teams a simple framework for reflection and self-assessment

Mobility scheme mechanism - Exchange of experience between HRMA from Montenegro and DoPA from Albania on the Recruitment System in the Albanian Civil Service (online meeting), 30 July 2020

At a request of the Human Resources Management Authority, an online meeting with the representatives of DoPA was organised on sharing experience on the recruitment system in the Albanian Civil Service.

A new strategic document on public administration reform is being prepared in Montenegro, and this was considered as a possibility for creating an employment platform. In Montenegro, they are currently reforming merit-based recruitment system, introducing competencies for senior management, introducing electronic testing of candidates, as well as some other novelties. Albania was recognised as a country with good practice example that was worth learning from. Albania proved to be a lead country in e-recruitment not only in the Western Balkans but also in Europe.

Due to the pandemic, instead of organising a mobility scheme, ReSPA organised an online meeting on 30 July. The participants of the meeting were the representatives of HRMA, Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro, who were virtually hosted by their colleagues from DoPA (Albania). During the meeting the representatives from Albania presented the e-platform with its functionalities, software solution and the steps in the recruitment process. Further consultations with the colleagues from Albania and exchange of experience with them will be required in the future.

Online training on remote management and online facilitation, 15-17 September 2020

In cooperation with Public One GmbH from Berlin, ReSPA organised online training devoted to remote management and online facilitation, held on 15th and 17th September 2020.

The participants were briefly introduced to The Five F Model – reliable support in teleworking and to many essential aspects of managing workforce remotely, which has become one of the main topics worldwide.

During the training, participants were discussing a lot of the challenges they are facing in online

management of staff in the field of remote control, such as motivation of the team, lack of technical knowledge and skills, lack of proper understanding etc.

Overall, the training has enabled the participants to spot the mistakes in a remote setup, learn tools and techniques on how to mitigate them, and to manage projects and staff in a remote setup.

Performance appraisal and career development

Guidelines - Towards effective performance appraisal in the Western Balkans: How to develop performance?

The objective of this document is to, based on the reviewed practices, provide practical examples and present new trends, which can enhance implementation of individual staff performance appraisal (ISPA) in the public administrations of the Western Balkans. The Guidelines presents different stages of ISPA cycle, including setting of objectives, continuous coaching and monitoring of performance, and reviews. At the end of each key section, checklists have been provided as tentative framework, aimed at incorporating good practices and making ISPA more purposeful for overall development of employees and their organisations.

Development of the Guidelines was implemented in cooperation with SIGMA through running an online survey which was conducted among 163 managers and 195 non-managers from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The survey results indicate specific implementation challenges and perceptions of civil servants with regards to specific ISPA aspects. They suggest that the infrequent provision of feedback, difficulty to set measurable objectives and lack of purposeful use of ISPA results are among the key challenges in the field which are shared by both managerial and non-managerial staff.

Five online meetings with the HRMD WG Members, 22 – 24 July 2020

Five interviews were conducted with representatives of Human Resources Management Working Group from 22-24 July, as a method of collecting more information on new trends and developments with regard to ISPA in the region.

3.3. Improved Quality of Public Services

Quality Management (QM) is one of the crucial pillars of our expertise. ReSPA is focused on assisting in upgrading the quality of public administration and public services among WB administrations. Therefore, the attention is given on design and implementation of regional analysis in subject areas and looking for challenges and solutions to be elaborated and implemented regionally.

In the past years, the primary focus has been given to the promotion and implementation of the QM methodological tools and instruments such as CAF (Common Assessment Framework) and others. In that regards Seasonal School on Digital Transformation (2019) and Seasonal School on Rapid Innovation Lab (2020) consolidated QM aspects i.e. some innovative methodological approaches such as Design Thinking and Agile Management into the context of Public Administration. It has been complemented by a number of CAF pilots in the WB region, Conferences designated to QM (CAF) such as Danube Governance Hub, and finally by setting ReSPA – SIGMA OECD PA Awards 2020.

Quality management

**ReSPA - KDZ Danube Governance Hub
forum, 7-8 November 2019,
Vienna, Austria**



Within the framework of the BACID II project, DGH Forum has been organised in Vienna together with the CAF responsible persons from Western Balkan countries enabling platform for knowledge exchange and networking of QM experts in public sector organisations. The forum concentrated on the following issues: what are

the CAF structures, strategies, implementation activities and experiences in EU countries, how to build up CAF Resource Centres and what steps in Western Balkan countries need to be done to implement CAF and Quality Management. The second day of the event focused on the state of the art of CAF implementation in the Western Balkan region and design of project fiches as a follow-up opportunity to BACID II project. The event also included the presentations on Agile management and wellbeing at work, which raised the great interest of the workshop participants.

Western Balkans Public Administration Awards



Preparatory activities for the Western Balkans Public Administration included the development of Methodology for PA Awards with consultative meetings with OECD/SIGMA representatives.

During the **Open call from 1 – 24 July 2020**, the great number of the applications have been received showing so many innovative approaches in the WB public administration which proved that public administrations in the region reached on the crisis promptly and effectively. After the Assessment phase (September-October) the jury choose the winners.

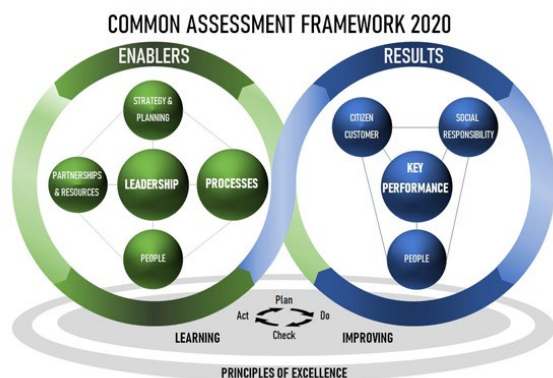
The entire process has been supervised, and the inputs have been prepared by the members of PA Awards Steering Committee (delegates of ReSPA and OECD/SIGMA).

Advance Phase of PA Awards Ceremony included Design and Event Execution

In the light of the global pandemic, the online PA Awards ceremony will be conducted on 6 November 2020 with the main focus on adaptability of government in extraordinary situations (pandemic COVID-19).

CAF 2020 Webinar - The standard for Excellent Management in Public Administration

As a consequence of ReSPA and KDZ collaboration, CAF 2020 Webinar has been designed and implemented in July 2020. The reason beyond the selection of such a topic is that in November 2019, the EUPAN Directors-General in Helsinki unanimously adopted the CAF2020. Certain changes such integration of agile management, resilience and wellbeing as well as SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) have been introduced in CAF 202 and as such were presented and elaborated during the workshop.



Implementation of BACID II project

The BACID II is a 3-year ADA-funded programme implemented by the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns and KDZ Centre for Public Administration Research, and a follow up of the BACID I. The Programme has an impact on overall socio-economic Development of Albania, Kosovo*, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova through effective delivery of public services supported by regional cooperation. Following the EU perspective of the region, the Programme supports the implementation of the South-East Europe (SEE) 2020 Strategy and its Dimension Governance for Growth through capacity building of national and local public administration as well as a partnership with other sectors for implementation of the European principles of good governance including gender and other cross-cutting issues.

In order to support further development of ReSPA Regional Quality Management Centre the workshop on Definition of Tasks and Work Plan of ReSPA RQC has been realised with the KDZ. The workshop has been used to reach

agreement main tasks of RQC including KDZ as supporting partner

The abovementioned activities have been upgraded with consultations between ReSPA Secretariat and the KDZ team focusing on the implementation of the CAF Improvement Plan and overcoming possible barriers:

- Setting up RQC website
- Book: CAF and QM in the Danube Region has been prepared
- ReSPA Staff Study Visit to KDZ, Vienna, Austria - has been realised by ReSPA and KDZ on 11-13 September 2019.

CAF Pilots

Based on the disseminated information, as foreseen by the project, at least five CAF pilots have been planned to be implemented. During the reporting period, many of the institutions who have expressed interest for the collaboration have been provided with project support.



Following institutions have been engaged in CAF pilot activity:

- CAF Pilot - Bureau of Metrology (Montenegro)
- CAF Pilot - Ministry of Public Administration (Montenegro)
- CAF Pilot - Ministry of Public Administration and local self-government (Serbia)
- CAF Pilot - Ministry of Justice (Bosnia and Herzegovina) (1st phase)

Future activities

- CAF Pilot - ADISA (Albania);
- External CAF Feedback training;
- PEF process in the region.

Digitalisation of public services

Ministerial Conference “Digital transformation: reinventing public administration for digital age”, 12-13 November 2019, Skopje, North Macedonia

The overall objective of the ReSPA Ministerial Conference was to discuss and identify lessons learned in the domain of Digital Transformation of Public Administration. The discussion led to the analysis of inspiring cases with the focus on their innovative elements and sustainable patterns. The event opened up the space for interaction between international (e.g. OPSI OECD, EC, RCC, UNDP, etc.) and regional actors. In addition, the Conference targeted representatives from the Western Balkan Public Administration Institutions responsible for the implementation of administrative reforms in the line ministries (Ministries responsible for Public Administration, Public Administration organisations responsible for eGovernment, Human Resources Management Authorities, Institutions dealing with Quality management,

Better Regulation, etc.), Academia, Civil Society Organizations, and Think Tank organisations' representatives. As a follow up, design of Ministerial declaration has been initiated in December 2019 relying on conclusions reached at the event.

ReSPA has realised its Ministerial Conference on “Digital transformation: Reinventing public administration for the digital age. As an overall conclusion It has been also confirmed to introduce an umbrella regional initiative in form of declaration that would be productive and proactive way to speed up cooperation and transformation of whole Western Balkan region. For latter mentioned process, ReSPA has engaged Senior eGovernment Expert who has jointly with RESPA representative drafted the Ministerial Declaration which has been shared with the RCC and agreed to be presented at the next Digital Summit, along with other documents. “Declaration on Digital transformation of the WB Ministries for public administration, including coordinated response on emergencies”, is another document that has been drafted by ReSPA in May 2020.



Ministerial Conference Devoted to the Digitalization QM and HRM,
 12-13 November 2019, Skopje, North Macedonia

Testimonials



Mr Branko Ružić

Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Republic of Serbia

Speech delivered at the online Ministerial Dialogue related to "Declaration on digital transformation", 8 September 2020

"Serbia for years now has Digitalization and Public Administration Reform high on the Government's Agenda. In light of the current COVID-19 crisis, Serbia supports the proposed Ministerial Declaration in the field of digital transformation of Public Administration in the crisis situation of the Western Balkan region.

The latest 2020 UN E-Government Survey puts Serbia on high 58 place from 193 countries and more particularly E-Participation Index (EPI) on 41 place as very high by UN classification. Other Western Balkan and Southeast countries are in similar places. Moving forward in International scale shows only that WB countries have been prioritising and investing in digitalisation and public administration reform before the crises.

The importance of digitalisation and E-Government are more visible after the situation with COVID-19, when both the governments and citizens had quickly to adapt to the new situation of reduced mobility and

physical inability to attend and perform daily tasks. Serbia started to use the electronic document, e-signature, e-seal and e-delivery, as well as to establish electronic registers as a basis for interoperability and data exchange via Government Service Bus.

It is interesting that one of the first responses of Serbia on COVID-19 was to use one of the results of PAR Reform – open, machine-readable data, as to provide constantly available data on the number of citizens infected with the COVID-19 virus in the territory of the Republic of Serbia (<https://covid19.data.gov.rs/>).

In other words, if the state had not prepared itself years before through the implementation of Public Administration Reform, primarily through digitalisation, E-Government, open data, it is likely that Serbia would not have been able to respond SO QUICKLY to the needs created by the new pandemic.

Following EU Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans is one of the topics Serbia supports, as well as developing platforms for collaboration between our countries. Efficiency of public administration and business environment in the situation of pandemic has a great importance. Serbia developed Strategy and Action Plan in Artificial Intelligence and strongly support usage of open data, Big data and Internet of things. In the same time, we are aware of risks as Digital Divide, Social Divide, Connectivity, and Privacy. We propose to find some mechanisms to reduce the impact of risks. Experience exchange in these fields can be one of the topic of our future collaboration.

"Declaration on digital transformation" will certainly give us an additional motive to continue with investing in digitalisation and public administration reforms even more strongly in the future"

All stated is one more reason why we need regional cooperation and the MPALSG will propose to authorities in Serbia that the focus of Serbia during the presidency next year will be improvement of the process of digitalisation with the support of quality management and crisis management, in order for governments to adapt to the new situation."

Development of Zero Data Open guideline

The design of “Zero Open data guideline” with genuine purpose to enhance and optimise the digitalisation of public administration by using open data has been extended due to the pandemic situation. The online preparation of the Guideline is in the final stage (the interviews of the survey were submitted in the final Draft which has been sent to the eGovernment Working group members for the validation purposes), and it will be presented online.

Seasonal School on Digital Transformation

Seasonal School on Digital Transformation realised during 2019 set a model on how to initiate and maintain multidisciplinary teams, and it was intended to replicate the event in 2020. Preparatory activities for the Seasonal school included the increase of the capacities of ReSPA Secretariat and ReSPA Governing structures capacities in the domain of use of Design Thinking methodology (February 2020, assignment of Design Thinking Academy, Amsterdam, the Netherlands).

Preparatory activity for the Seasonal School on Digital Transformation 2020

As preparatory activities for the Seasonal School, ReSPA has established a unique online collaboration platform entitled COVID-19 Western Balkans Digital Collaborative Platform in regards to support to the WB countries administrations to adjust to the crisis and establish adequate response to the COVID-19 pandemic with three consecutive conferences held during April and May 2020.

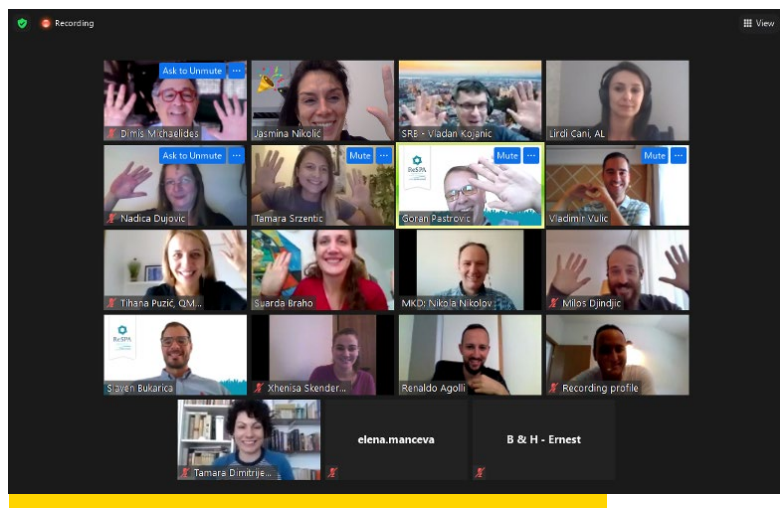
Seasonal School on Rapid Innovation Lab 2020, online, 28 September – 2 October 2020

This year's ReSPA SeasonalSchool aimed to provide the opportunity to the Western Balkan Public Administration teams to connect online, collaborate across silos, share ideas, and discuss current and future issues public administration is trying to tackle in particularly in the extraordinary situations.

Initially scheduled to take place in Montenegro, ReSPA Seasonal School on Rapid Innovation Lab 2020 was organised through online sessions from 28 September until 2 October 2020 with additional two-day preparatory activities (two 3 hour webinars) which were organised in the week



14th-18 September 2020. ReSPA Seasonal School was focusing on the following modules and topics: Strengths Finder, Human Ware, Human-Centred Change Management, Agile, Iterative Methodologies & Mindset, Product & Quality Management, Resilience & Wellbeing, Remote teams, Crisis Communication, Data Science & Journalism. It generated quite a lot of good recommendations for the follow up including setting initiatives which would comprise design and testing of certain (digital) public services with the special emphasis of service assessability.



Testimonials



Sanja Tajsić

*Common Assessment Framework (CAF) Coordinator
Expert advisor for improving the services in
the public administration, State Administration
Agency of the Republika Srpska*

"During 2019, I was the coordinator of ReSPA's activity entitled "In-country support mechanism – CAF consensus workshop". Organised through consecutive workshops, it aimed to support the State Administration Agency of the Republika Srpska (ADU) in the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) implementation but also to develop its internal capacities to finalise the CAF implementation independently (which means educating trainers and mentors who will provide more effective implementation of the CAF process within public administrations).

ReSPA team met our needs and organised the workshops very professionally, focusing on building our internal capacities. We got the knowledge and insights on how we can implement CAF independently, which is essential for our further implementation of the CAF process.

I want to emphasise our more than ten years long cooperation with ReSPA team, to whom I would like to thank this time, especially to Mr Goran Paštrović, ReSPA Programme Manager who provided all the support in realisation of this challenging goal.

Also, I firmly believe that we can spread our cooperation widely. It would be beneficial for all of us in public administration of the Republika Srpska if we can count on ReSPA's support in other areas such as support in developing conferential online centres, different training, etc. in the period after the pandemic."

ReSPA/SCRUM Regional gathering

Following intensive work in the areas of Quality Management and digital transformation, ReSPA introduced the Agile concept for the very first time in ReSPA activities within 2019 Seasonal School on Digital Transformation, followed by Quality management (Danube Governance Hub) meeting at the end of 2019. Both events endorsed the idea that modern PA systems need to integrate aspects of the agile framework.

Consultative meetings focusing on Agile Management and aligned functions and roles have been initiated in April 2020 and further realised during May 2020 to obtain the feedback and fine-tune some of the foreseen activities in line with the agile principles (e.g. COVID-19 Western Balkans Digital Collaborative platform).

The regional meeting has been postponed from June to 7 December 2020 and its realisation will rely on pandemic situation.

Open Government Partnership

OGP International event 2020, 9 – 13 March 2020, Uruguay, Argentina

Twenty-three ReSPA delegates from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia jointly with Open Government Secretariat representative as well as OGP point of contact from Croatia have visited Argentina and Uruguay. The overall goal of the ReSPA – OGP International event was to learn how both related governments at the local and central level implement the activities foreseen in so-called OGP action plans. The event has been used to discuss the possible follow up activities which included an idea for the Development of the OGP online repository. It has been broadly discussed (pros and cons). Furthermore, as an idea, the possibility of regional (joint) commitments was taken into account. As a possible good example of regional cooperation, joint promotion of open government principles was suggested. However, it has been concluded it would be more important to develop a specification for the platform related to the monitoring of the OGP action plan implementation, etc. In the next period, it would be important to define if OGP Secretariat may support design and maintenance of the regional platform which may support both national and regional initiatives in the subject.

| Development of ReSPA monitoring and evaluation system

ReSPA engaged an expert for Development of the M&E system. The system aims to ensure measuring the extent to which progress is being made towards achieving ReSPA's vision, mission and goals. With support of the ReSPA staff, the expert revised the Intervention Logic.

Development of outputs and the relevant indicators was conducted through the Workshop that gathered 65 participants, the members of all ReSPA Working groups, Programme Committee, Governing Board Senior Level and Liaison Officers. The Workshop ensured participatory Development of the first draft of direct and induced outputs which represent the core of the ReSPA Monitoring System. The importance of the active role of working groups in this process of development of indicators as well as in the ReSPA programming was underlined.



Development of the Monitoring toolkit

Upon obtaining comments or proposals, the ReSPA team with support of the expert continued with further Development of the monitoring toolkit with questionnaires for gathering data on the perception of the participants on the quality of ReSPA activities. The template questionnaires for gathering data on induced output indicators were developed. The template was also developed for gathering data on implementation of recommendations for ReSPA policy papers. The existing template questionnaire for gathering data on direct output indicators was slightly revised.

Training on Preparation for Effective Online Training, Webinars, and Meetings, 29 July 2020

The situation with COVID-19 caused a huge impact on the Public Administration in the WB countries as well as ReSPA. A need for transformation of face to face meetings/conferences/training into online ones was recognised as important not only in this COVID-19 situation, but also in any other crisis situation. That is why ReSPA requested and obtained approval from the EC Task Manager for organising of online training for ReSPA staff on preparation for effective online training, webinars and meetings. The training contributed to increasing knowledge and skills of the ReSPA staff, which will contribute to improved quality of online events that ReSPA will organise in the future.

The first monitoring activity is planned for June 2021. Through this activity we shall obtain average scores for each induced output indicator which will be as a baseline for the countries respectively. This activity shall also support setting of targets for induced outputs for the respective countries.

4. ReSPA Governance

Governing Board

The 42nd Governing board at the Senior Official level, 2-3 December 2019, Danilovgrad, Montenegro

The Governing Board formally approved the Report from the 41st GB SL meeting, held on 2 October 2019 and the Report on ReSPA Operations and Implementation of the Programme of Work for the period 1 October – 31 December 2019. The Governing Board tasked Secretariat to develop for the next Governing Board meeting the proposal regarding the composition of the working groups to ensure both, continuity and the possibility for selection of the right target audience for a particular topic.

Furthermore, the Governing Board agreed to align the reporting period of the reports on ReSPA Operations and Implementation of the Programme of Work with the calendar of the GB meetings, to cover the period from meeting to meeting.

In regard to financial and operations issues, the Governing Board agreed to postpone the discussion on VAT Exemption in ReSPA Members and advised to possibly engage legal expert and, afterwards, to introduce this matter to the Budget Committee to provide opinion. In addition, the Governing board took information on the status of overtaking management and administration of the ReSPA Campus and the ReSPA Liquidity and National Contributions 2019.



The 43rd Governing board at the Senior Official level, 29 April 2020, online

The Governing Board formally approved the Report from the 42nd GB SL meeting, held on 2-3 December 2019 and the Report on ReSPA Operations and Implementation of the Programme of Work for the period 2 December 2019 – 16 March 2020.

The Governing Board adopted the Resolution No GB-SL R/01-2020 Amending the Staff Regulations of ReSPA. The main novelty of the updated Staff Regulations is introduction of the upgraded recruitment and selection procedure for ReSPA international staff in order to bring on board the best candidates from the region in the upcoming recruitment processes (Programme Manager and Operations and Finance Manager).

In regard to financial and operations issues, the Governing Board acknowledged the ReSPA Annual Financial Report 2019. It took note on the Note to the file submitted by the OFM-C and the Independent legal opinion.

The Governing Board is aware that ReSPA is operating in accordance with the law, which further confirms the Independent legal opinion and the Opinion of the Tax Administration of Montenegro. In that regard, ReSPA Director enjoys the full support of all members of the Governing Board and the EC. Furthermore, the Governing Board adopted Resolution No GB-SL R/02-2020 on Addendum to the Core Budget 2020 and Decision No GB-SL D/02-2020 on the amount of Working Capital Fund for 2020. In addition, the Governing Board approved Core Budget Amendments 2019, took information on the status of overtaking management and administration of the ReSPA Campus, the Information related to commencement of External Audit by KPMG and the information on the ReSPA Liquidity and National Contributions 2019.

The 44th Governing board at the Senior Official level, 2 July and 23 July 2020

The session of the Governing Board, held on 2 July was devoted to the programme activities, while the topics related to the financial and operations issues were presented and discussed at the joint meeting with the Budget Committee, held on 23 July 2020.

At the session held on 2 July, the GB formally approved the Report from the 43rd GB SL meeting held on 29 April 2020. Furthermore, the GB concluded that the Director's Report for the period 1 January – 31 December 2019 is satisfactory and agreed that Secretariat sends the decision on performance evaluation to be adopted by the Governing Board at Ministerial level in the written procedure, as well as recommended to ReSPA to strengthen further the promotion and visibility of ReSPA and its activities and results.

The GB approved the Report on ReSPA Operations and Implementation of the Programme of Work for the period 17 March – 17 June 2020, took note of the update of the Plan of the Activities for 2020 in line with the circumstances caused by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and agreed to hold a consultative meeting on this topic in September 2020. The GB set a date for 11th Governing Board meeting to be held on 6 November 2020, depending on the situation with COVID-19. The Governing Board agreed to change the existing model of the composition of the working groups to have a pool of members, instead of permanent and substitute members. In that regard, the ReSPA Secretariat prepared the overview of the sub-areas to be covered by each working group during July 2020 in order for the GB members to provide additional appointments for each working group to cover sub-areas that are not present. The Governing Board adopted the Resolution NoGB – SL R/03-2020 Amending the Staff Regulations of ReSPA, related to disciplinary measures. Furthermore, the GB took note on the status of the Development of the Monitoring & Evaluation system of ReSPA and information that due to COVID crisis and delay in the whole process the first monitoring results will be part of the Annual report for 2021 instead 2020. In addition, the note was taken on the information on the recruitment processes for Programme Manager – Legal, Programme Manager and Operations and Finance Manager and the information related to Kosovo* accession to ReSPA. The GB set the date for the 45th GB SL meeting to take place on 2 October 2020.

In regard to operations and financial issues, following the recommendations of the Budget Committee, the GB adopted the Independent Auditor's report for ReSPA Financial Statements for the period 1 January-31 December 2019 and, within the scope of the Audit report for 2019, adopted Decision GB SL No 03 – 2020 on discharging the Director from her management and administrative responsibility for 2019. The GB adopted the Independent Auditor's report for ReSPA Financial Statements for the period 1 January - 31 December 2019, and took note on the Auditor's Letter to the Management and related Budget Committee recommendations on further activities in that regard. Furthermore, the GB took note on the information related to: Status on the takeover of ReSPA Campus by Montenegro, EC Grant Implementation Plan and presentation on the Business intelligence overview, ReSPA Procurement Status and Plan for period June – December 2020 and the Report on National Contributions, ReSPA liquidity, and efficient cash management.

The 45th Governing board at the Senior Official level, online, 2 October 2020

The overall objective of the Meeting was to discuss the following: Report on ReSPA Operations and Implementation of the Programme of Work for the period 18 June – 18 September 2020, the adapted Plan of Activities by the end of 2020, draft of the Programme of Work 2021-2022, Interim IFRS Financial Report 1 January – 30 June 2020, and Draft of the ReSPA Budget 2021/2022 with Annual Envelope for 2021.

ReSPA Programme of Work for the period 18 June – 18 September 2020 encompassed information on the activities related to the ReSPA Governance and Operations and implementation of Programme activities including novelties on performed communication and visibility activities.

The Governing Board took note on the adapted Plan of Activities by the end of the 2020 year (developed following the conditions approved by the Grant coordinator in the European Commission) and initiated communication with DG DIGIT supported by the DG NEAR.

ReSPA Secretariat also presented the Programme of Work 2021-2022 which supports the implementation of the Strategy 2019 - 2024, ensures proper functioning of the organisation and provides an overview of the activities that will be implemented during the next two years.



The interim financial statements for the period 1 January – 30 June 2020 were presented while comparing them with the figures from the same period last year. Concerning the Interim Financial Report, the Secretariat introduced the implementation rate of the Core Budget at the rate of 33.68%.

At the Meeting, ReSPA Secretariat presented the *Monitoring Toolkit* developed for assessing the contributions and influence of ReSPA against pre-defined indicators of what is planned and expected. The system consists of a monitoring framework and a monitoring toolkit. The monitoring toolkit provides ReSPA's monitoring framework with a list of indicators of outcomes and outputs defined following ReSPA's Programme of Work, with an assessment methodology, measurement criteria for monitoring, and descriptions of sub-indicators and tools for monitoring.

ReSPA Secretariat invited the Members to utilise better the "in-country support mechanism" to support this activity by the end of September 2020.

At the end of the Meeting, the Members set a date for 11th Governing Board meeting at Ministerial Level to be held on 6 November 2020.

Appointment of the members of the Appeal Board of ReSPA

In the reporting period, the Governing Board adopted the Decision amending the Decision on Establishing the Appeal Board of ReSPA in written procedure (27 December 2019). In line

with Article 3 of the mentioned Decision and following the expiration of the mandate of the Appeal Board established in 2015, upon the approval by the Governing Board, the ReSPA Secretariat published the call for expression of interest for appointment to the Appeal Board, which was extended by 3 March 2020. ReSPA Secretariat conducted the administrative check of the received applications and prepared the draft Decision of the Appointment of the members of the Appeal Board of ReSPA, and was adopted by the Governing Board at Senior Official level.

Governing Board development session

ReSPA Governing Board members at the Senior Official level, ReSPA Director and number of ReSPA staff participated in the Design Thinking Fundamentals & Facilitation Course 2020, which takes place on 4-6 February 2020, delivered by the Design Thinkers Academy, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

The participants were introduced into the key skills for facilitating design thinking activities and workshops, linking "designerly" approaches to current practices for developing strategies and services and working on an actual challenge using design thinking approaches, activities and tools with a focus on actual facilitation. More information is presented in the section devoted to implementation of the ReSPA Programme of Work.

Budget Committee

29th Budget Committee meeting, 14-15 April 2020, online

The meeting was postponed from March to April due to the outbreak of pandemic COVID-19 and was held online. It gathered all BC Representatives who reviewed Report on the implementation of ReSPA annual work programme, budget and staff resources and ReSPA Financial Report for 2019. Budget Committee recommended to the Governing Board to acknowledge these financial reports along with Note to the file and legal opinion. ReSPA Secretariat briefed Committee on the status of handover of the ReSPA Campus. Also, Budget Committee took note on the Donor fund -annual plan of activities and related outputs regarding the EC Grant.

The Committee Members recommended payment of € 215,000 EUR into Working Capital Fund for 2020 and permitted limited use of carry over funds from the previous year for the authorised ReSPA activities listed in the ReSPA Core Budget Addendum 2020.

ReSPA Secretariat informed BC about the online annual audit where documentation was shared through EDOPS, existing financial software. The physical archive is at ReSPA's premises in Danilovgrad.

30th Budget Committee meeting, ReSPA GB and BC joint session, 23 July 2020, online

The Budget Committee recommended to the ReSPA Governing Board to adopt the Independent Auditor's report for ReSPA Financial Statements for the period 1 January – 31 December 2019.

The Budget Committee recommended, within the scope of the Audit report for 2019, to Governing Board to

discharge the Director from her Management and administrative responsibility in the previous year.

At the same time the Governing Board adopted the Independent Auditor's report for ReSPA Financial

Statements for the period 1 January – 31 December 2019. and, within the scope of the

Audit report for 2019, adopted Decision GB SL No 03 – 2020 on discharging the Director from her management and administrative responsibility for 2019.

ReSPA Secretariat updated BC/GB on the Status of the takeover of ReSPA Campus by Montenegro's government; Donor Funds – New EC Grant Implementation Plan; Business intelligence overview presentation; ReSPA Procurement Status and Plan for period June – December 2020.

31st Budget Committee meeting, 18 September 2020, online

The 31st online Budget Committee Meeting gathered all BC Representatives where important issues were discussed starting with the ReSPA Comprehensive Interim Financial Statements concerning the period between 1 January – 30 June 2020; status of overtaking Management and Administration of ReSPA Hotel; Donor Funds-Business Intelligence overview and Activity Plan for the implementation period September – December 2020 and beyond

The most important item discussed at the meeting was the Draft proposal of ReSPA Budget 2021-2022 and National Envelope for 2021.



5. Cooperation and Partnership Building

Working breakfast with the diplomatic representatives of the ReSPA Members, 30 October 2019, ReSPA Headquarters, Danilovgrad, Montenegro



ReSPA Director invited the ambassadors of the ReSPA Members to Montenegro and representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro to the working breakfast. This opportunity was used to present to the diplomatic representatives the recent achievements of ReSPA and the implementation of the current Strategy and Programme of Work. Initiatives of ReSPA towards widening the scope of the involved partners and extending its activities to additional counties were greeted by the participants.



EUROFEDOP Seminar on Employment Security and Public Sector Reform in the Western Balkans, 12-13 December 2019, Belgrade, Serbia

ReSPA Director took part in the EUROFEDOP seminar, in particular panel devoted to the effect of public sector reforms in the Western Balkans, delivering presentation related to PAR in the Western Balkan- results and future challenges.

ReSPA participates at the opening of the National Training Academy of Serbia, 15 January 2020, Belgrade, Serbia

Among ENA, the EU, UNDP and other donors and international organisations, ReSPA has been mentioned in the opening speech of Mr Maravić, NAPA director as one of the credible contributors to the foundations of NAPA. The opening event gathered representatives of different institutions, Ms Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, Mr Branko Ružić, Minister of Public administration and local self-government. Mr Sem Fabrici, Ambassador of the EU delegation in Serbia addressed the audience emphasising the importance of continues learning for the entire society, in particular for Public Administration.



ReSPA participates in the Design Thinking Training, 4-6 February 2020, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Design Thinking Training Fundamentals & Facilitation Course 2020, took place on 4-6 February 2020, delivered by the Design Thinkers Academy, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. ReSPA Governing Board members at the Senior Official level, ReSPA Director and some ReSPA staff were introduced into the key skills for facilitating design thinking activities and workshops, linking "designerly" approaches to current practices for developing strategies and services and working on an actual challenge using design thinking approaches, activities and tools with a focus on actual facilitation.



Meeting with Ms Jana Repansek, Centre of Excellence in Finance, 14 February 2020, Ljubljana, Slovenia

ReSPA Director, accompanied by Programme Manager, Ms. Bartula Musikic held a meeting with the CEF representatives. ReSPA was introduced with the CEF rules and procedures in managing donor projects in the context of future Development of ReSPA Policy on Partnering and Development. Special attention was paid to Leadership Programme that ReSPA and CEF have on their agendas as well as the potential visit of the HRMD WG to Slovenia in the autumn 2020. The Leadership Programme was also discussed with Mr. Drikus Kriek, Vice Dean for Pedagogy and Director of Executive PhD Program of the IEDC – Bled School of Management.

ReSPA meets with World Economic Forum representatives, 25 February, Geneva, Switzerland

One of the important and fruitful meets was organised 25 February 2020 at World Economic Forum headquarters in Geneva, where ReSPA representatives were introduced with the aspects of further communication in the domain of launching of the Regional Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the Western Balkan as well WEF intention to establish its first regional Competitiveness and Innovation Accelerator for the Western Balkans.

ReSPA Director Ms Ratka Sekulović visited Ambassador of Turkey to Montenegro H.E. Ms Songül Ozan

Ms Ratka Sekulović, Director of ReSPA, met H.E. Ms. Songül Ozan, Ambassador of Turkey to Montenegro, on 20 November 2019 at the premises of Turkish Embassy in Podgorica. ReSPA Director presented ReSPA, its achievements, as well as the efforts in supporting the regional cooperation and modernization of public administrations in Western Balkan countries. She emphasized that the new ReSPA Strategy for the period 2019-2024 is focused on the support to the better implementation of PAR and PFM strategies, further professionalization of public servants, and better quality of public services.



H.E. Ms Songül Ozan positively assessed the ReSPA's achievements, support to the Western Balkan countries in the path to European integration, and its contribution to strengthening the regional co-operation.

Both sides agreed to further explore possibilities for improving the cooperation between Turkey and ReSPA, in order to exchange experience in many areas relative to good governance. In that sense, H.E. Ms. Songül Ozan emphasized that the Turkish experience related to e-services would be the most valuable for sharing with the regional countries.

6. The Way Forward

Since its establishment in 2010, ReSPA has offered a structured, institutionalised and reliable framework for cooperation and support in the area of public administration, strengthened exchange with the EU and its Members and contributed to the continuous development of administrative and human capacities in the Western Balkans in accordance with the European Principles for Public Administration.

Given its institutional dynamics, ReSPA has demonstrated its ability to reconsider its concrete programmes and activities within the entrusted mandate in order to best tailor its operations and cooperation modalities to the needs of the region. The needs of ReSPA Members are identified in ReSPA's Strategy 2019 – 2024 and transposed into concrete activities in its Programme of Work.

As for its future orientation, ReSPA is committed to continuously support policy coordination efforts and the specific networking and exchange platforms among its Members that it has already established and will further develop and empower such cooperative efforts.

The long-lasting reforming and modernising endeavours, as well as the need to foster their effects and the further need for constant exchange among the administrations, will also require ReSPA's presence as a cooperative framework in the future. It has been proven that quality activities require liaison with third parties and this approach shall be also applied in the forthcoming years.

ReSPA's evolution has proven its flexibility and responsiveness by adapting to new roles and tasks and demonstrated its readiness to explore and implement the best ways to support its Members to respond to particular challenges and reform requirements.

Therefore, ReSPA will put in place modalities that focus on Digital Transformation of Public Administration with innovative elements and sustainable patterns. Support of the WB



governments in the area of e-Government and Digitalization means delivering fresh ideas and new initiatives. Hence, ReSPA will foster collaboration with the Directorate-General for Informatics (DG DIGIT) proactively in order to establish its strong support in realization of upcoming activities that will accelerate the digitalization among WB public administration.

Also, devotion for the institutionalization of ReSPA as the “Regional Quality Management Center” in the Western Balkans will mark our activities in the upcoming period. Determined to position itself as the Regional Quality Management Center means positioning itself as the regional center of expertise in quality management and CAF implementation that coordinates with the national quality management units (national coordinators) and serves as a training and consultancy center.

Finally, our activities and vast experience in public administration area may serve as a vehicle for collecting additional funds. Policy recommendations and those provided within our comparative studies can encourage further diversification of activities and funding. We will stay open to additional members by providing different modalities for cooperation.

List of Acronyms

- AAPA** - Asian Association for Public Administration
- AAPAM** - African Association for Public Administration and Management
- ACSH** - Astana Civil Service Hub
- ADA** - Austrian Development Agency
- ADISA** - Agency for Delivery of Integrated Services, Albania
- BACID** - Building Administrative Capacities in the Danube Region
- BC** - Budget Committee
- BiH** - Bosnia and Herzegovina
- CAF** - Common Assessment Framework
- CAF NC** - Common Assessment Framework National Correspondents
- CCE** - Centre for Civil Education
- CEF** - Centre of Excellence in Finance
- CEPA** - Committee of Experts on Public Administration
- CHHS** - Office of Innovation at California Health and Human Services Agency
- CSA** - Civil Service Agency
- CSO** - Civil Society Organisation
- DG** - Directorate General
- DG DIGIT** - Directorate-General for Informatics
- DG NEAR** - Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
- DPIDG** - Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government
- EC** - European Commission
- EIPA** - European Institute for Public Administration
- EROPA** - Eastern Regional Organisation for Public Administration
- EU** - European Union
- EUI** - European Integration
- EUPAN** - European Public Administration Network
- E&Y** - Ernst and Young
- FBiH** - Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- GB** - Governing Board
- GB ML** - Governing Board at Ministerial Level
- GB SL** - Governing Board at Senior Officials Level
- GIZ** - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
- HLPD** - High-Level Policy Dialogue
- HRMA** - Human Resources Management Authority
- HRMD** - Human Resources Management and Development
- HRMIS** - Human Resource Management Information System
- IIAS** - International Institute of Administrative Sciences
- IPA** - Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
- ISA** - Interoperability Solutions in Administration
- IT** - Information Technology
- JRC** - Joint Research Centre of the European Commission
- KDZ** - Public Administration Research Center, Vienna, Austria
- M&E** - Monitoring and Evaluation
- MoU** - Memorandum of Understanding
- MPA** - Ministry of Public Administration
- MTBF** - Medium Term Budgetary Framework
- NALAS** - Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe
- NGO** - Non-Governmental Organisation
- NISPacee** - Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe
- OECD** - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- OGP** - Open Government Partnership
- OPSI** - Observatory for Public Service Innovation
- PAR** - Public Administration Reform
- PC** - Programme Committee
- PFM** - Public Finance Management
- PPA** - Principles for Public Administration
- QM** - Quality Management
- RCC** - Regional Cooperation Council
- ReSPA** - Regional School of Public Administration
- RS** - Republic of Srpska
- SASS** - Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences
- SEE** - South-East Europe
- SDG** - Sustainable Development Goals
- SIGMA** - Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
- UCLG-A** - United Cities and Local Governments of Africa
- UNDESA** - United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- UNPAN** - United Nations Public Administration Network
- WB** - Western Balkans
- WeBER** - Western Balkans Enabling Project for Civil Society Monitoring of Public Administration Reform
- WG** - Working Group

ReSPA Secretariat 2020

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Our vision:

We are an intergovernmental innovative regional hub for policy research, knowledge sharing, regional cooperation and networking in the field of public administration.

Our mission:

We improve regional cooperation, promote shared learning and support the development of public administrations within the Western Balkans, and support the integration of the countries in the region into the EU.

Motto:

Building Together Governance for the Future!

Annual Report 2020



ReSPA

Regional School
of Public Administration

BUILDING TOGETHER
GOVERNANCE FOR THE FUTURE

Regional School of Public Administration

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